

TAUNTON'S

Pull-out Guide to Sauces

MAY 2000 NO. 38

fine COOKING

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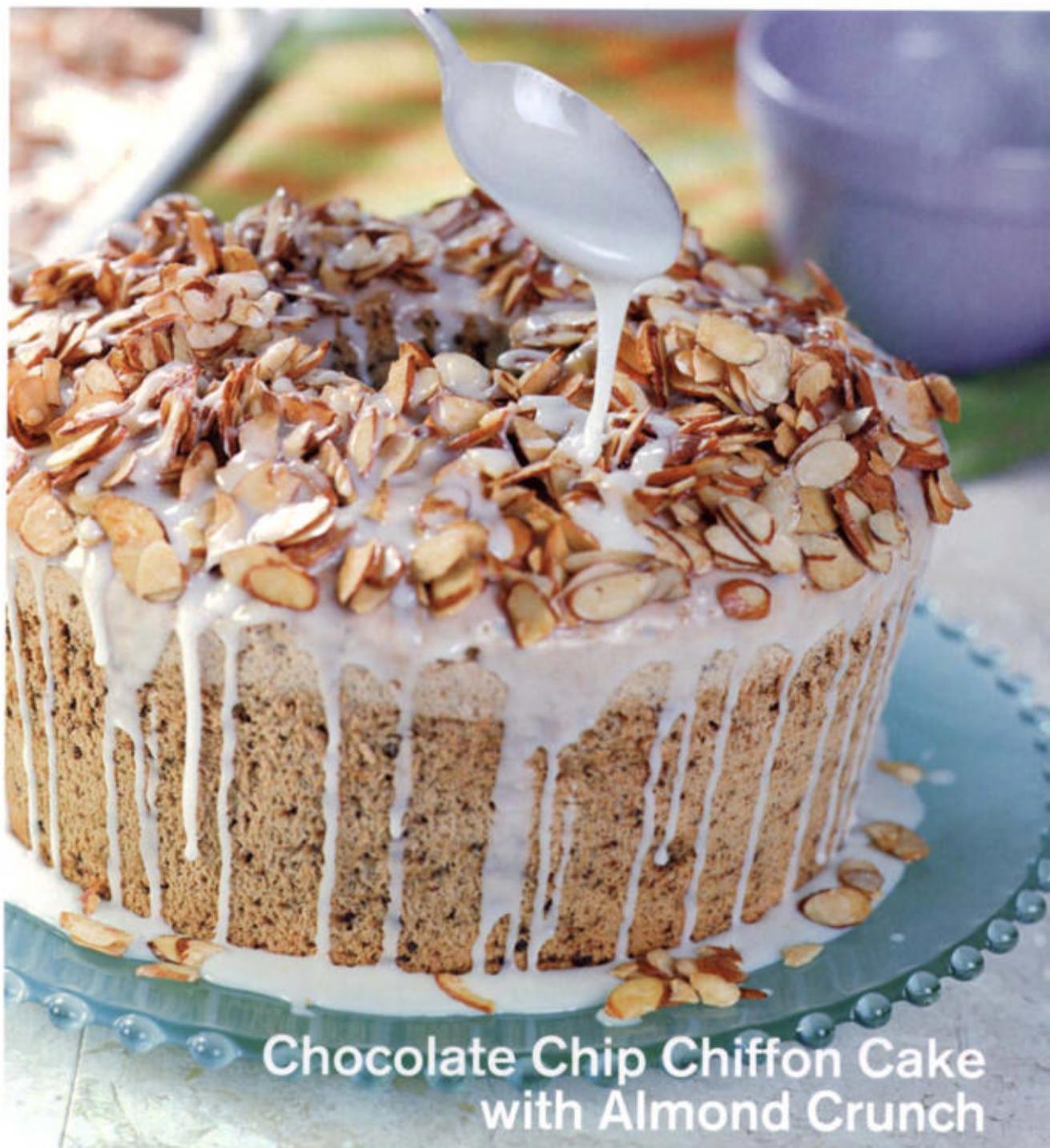
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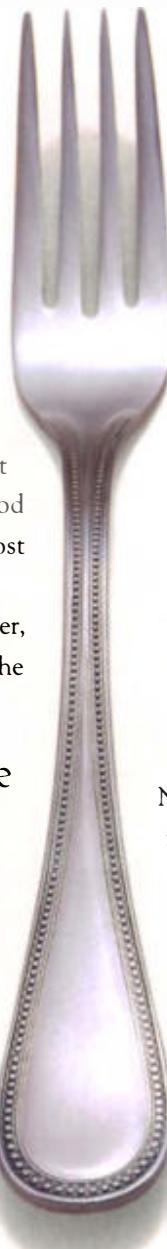
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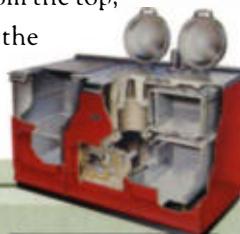


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APRIL/MAY 2000 ISSUE 38



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On the cover: Chocolate Confetti Chiffon Cake, p. 73.

Cover photo, Scott Phillips.

These pages: top left series, Scott Phillips; center, Ben Fink; bottom left, Mark Ferri; below, Amy Albert.

44 Transform fresh peas into vibrant springtime soup, risotto, and pasta.



Visit our web site at www.finecooking.com for a new video on whipping egg whites.

CONTRIBUTORS



Elinor Klivans ("Chiffon Cakes," p. 73) studied pastry in France at La Varenne and at Ecole Lenôtre. A former restaurant chef in her hometown of Camden, Maine, she now devotes her time to writing cookbooks and teaching across the country. Her books include *Bake & Freeze Desserts* (which was nominated for an IACP/Julia Child Cookbook Award), *Bake & Freeze Chocolate Desserts* (Broadway Books), and *125 Cookies to Bake, Nibble & Savor* (Bantam). Elinor is working on a new book, called *Fearless Baking*, to be published by Simon & Schuster in the fall of 2001.

Molly Stevens ("Sauce Guide," p. 18B) is a food writer, editor, and teacher, as well as a contributing editor to *Fine Cooking*. She

learned the classic repertoire of French sauces during her culinary training in France, and while she doesn't make *demi-glace* too often, she believes that a good sauce does more for a

meal than any other component. Molly is the author of the forthcoming *Williams-Sonoma New American Cooking: New England* (Time Life) and is working on a potato cookbook.

Abigail Johnson Dodge ("Baked Chicken," p. 36) is the test kitchen director for *Fine Cooking* and the author of *Great Fruit Desserts* (Rizzoli) and the forthcoming *Williams-Sonoma The Kid's Cookbook* (Time Life). Abby also contributed to the *New Joy of Cooking* (Scribner) and teaches cooking classes to both kids and adults.



switched to selling his books and private-label products, such as grits, cornmeal, and relishes, from his web site, www.hoppinjohns.com. His books include *Hoppin' John's Lowcountry Cooking*, *The New Southern Cook* (both Bantam), and *The Fearless Frying Cookbook* (Workman).



Deborah Madison ("Peas," p. 44) was a founding chef at Greens restaurant in San Francisco. She's the author of several award-winning cookbooks, including *Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone* (Broadway) which won a James Beard award and the IACP Cookbook of the Year award. Her new book, *This Can't be Tofu!*, is due out this spring from Broadway.

Kay Fahey ("Spoonbread," p. 48) is a food fanatic who also happens to be a writer. She has just received a grant to write a memoir about growing up in Houston. Naturally, the book will feature her food memories prominently, from feasting on fresh crabs to cooling off from the Texas heat with frozen grapes. Kay wrote "Old-Fashioned Candies" (*Fine Cooking* #36) and "Green Tomatoes" (#21).

After graduating from the New England Culinary Institute in Vermont, **Brigid Callinan** ("Lemon Meringue Pie," p. 50) headed down to Durham, North Carolina, to work at Magnolia Grill and Pop's, where she launched her baking career. She moved to

the Napa Valley in 1996 to become the pastry chef at Mustards Grill; she is currently collaborating with the restaurant's chef-owner, Cindy Pawlcyn, on a cookbook. Brigid is a runner, a movie maven, an Idaho native, and a certifiable Jeopardy freak (she was a contestant on the show last March).

After graduating from college in 1986 with a degree in Germanic Literature & Language, **David Norman** ("Rye Bread," p. 54) chuck the books to pursue his passion for the breads he discovered while studying in Europe. Since then, he has worked in renowned bakeries across the country. In 1996, David joined Ecce Panis, an artisan bread shop in New York, as executive sous-chef. In 1998, he was lured away to teach in the first boulangerie program offered at the French Culinary Institute in New York. He returned to Ecce Panis in 1999 as executive chef and head baker.

Marie Jarzemski ("Pierogis," p. 60) emigrated to the U.S. from Poland over 40 years ago. She's the chef-owner of The Warsaw Café in Philadelphia, where she has been preparing delicate interpretations of her native

cuisine since opening the restaurant in 1979 with her son, Mario. **Cole Chabon** is a cook who has worked in some of Philadelphia's best restaurants, including The Garden and The Warsaw Café.

She's now the catering manager for Manna, a nonprofit organization that prepares and delivers food to homebound people with HIV-related illnesses.



Susie Middleton ("Convection Cooking," p. 68) is an associate editor for *Fine Cooking*. A graduate of Peter Kump's New York Cooking School, she earned her convection-cooking wings roasting hundreds of pounds of vegetables for a gourmet market in Newport, Rhode Island.



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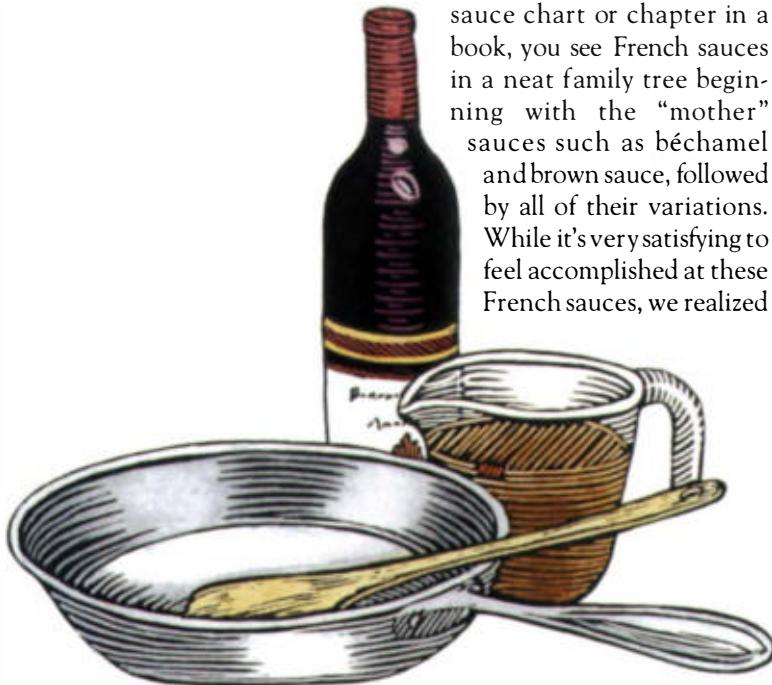


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that we don't often make many of these sauces in our daily cooking, and we doubt that you do either. So we've devised our own "family" of sauces, an eclectic and perhaps even arbitrary group, but a group of sauces that you probably want to cook often. The reason we've put them in a pull-out chart is to make it easy for you to whip up a sauce without much plan-

FROM THE EDITOR

Check out the chart

You've probably already noticed that there's an extra feature in this issue—a pull-out guide to sauces. This is the second of these pullouts that we've produced (the first one being the spice guide in *Fine Cooking* #32). We picked sauces as our subject because we think that having a rich repertoire of sauces at your command can make cooking and creating in the kitchen more fun.

Often when you see a sauce chart or chapter in a book, you see French sauces in a neat family tree beginning with the "mother" sauces such as béchamel and brown sauce, followed by all of their variations. While it's very satisfying to feel accomplished at these French sauces, we realized

ning. Sauces shouldn't be only special-occasion elements, nor should making a sauce require lots of searching through cookbooks and shopping for specific ingredients. Most sauces can be spur-of-the-moment improvements to a dish, which is how we hope you'll use the chart. Say you're cooking a pork chop... nice enough with just some salt and pepper, maybe some thyme, but fabulous with a roasted red pepper coulis. A friend made an angel food cake the other day for a birthday party, frosted it with whipped cream and topped it with tropical fruit—beautiful—but then she made a maple-rum *crème anglaise* to drizzle onto the slices of cake...the dessert rose to a new level of deliciousness. Or you're going to grill a couple of chicken breasts for dinner...again. As they grill, mix up a ginger-soy dipping sauce and you've got a spicy, savory satay.

The chart offers complete (though concise) recipes for more than 50 sauces. Once you've made a sauce a few times, you'll only need to check the chart for some measurements—perhaps—freedom from recipes, and inspiration for creative cooking.

Are you coming to the Hudson Valley with us?

Our second culinary tour for *Fine Cooking* readers is coming up soon. From June 15 to 18, we'll be touring New York's Hudson Valley in search of top-notch handmade food products and in pursuit of improving our own

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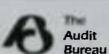
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For more details, see our ad on p. 33 or call HMS Travel at 800/367-5348 and say you're from *Fine Cooking*.

Searching for syrup

We've heard from several readers who wanted to make Mrs. Bruner's Boston Cream Candy (*Fine Cooking* #36, p. 44) but didn't know what light Karosyrup is. Karosyrup is the brand name for corn syrup; we were carelessly using the proprietary name as

the generic name, but clearly Karo isn't on every grocery shelf as we had assumed. Many of the inquiries came from Canada, where both light and dark corn syrup are available under a few brand names, including Crown and St. Lawrence. Sorry for the confusion. Try the candy—it's fantastic.

FROM READERS

Unglazed pottery for perfect pie crust

Your Basics on pie pans (*Fine Cooking* #36, p. 70) left out the best pan I've ever used—an unglazed terra cotta pan. The porous material created a shell that was crisp, never soggy. The pans were being made by a small company out of Oregon that's no longer in business. I haven't been able to find them again, though I have tried.

—Mary V. Foote,
Tierra Amarilla, NM

Getting a razor edge on a chef's knife

I can't think of a more controversial subject than knife sharpening, except maybe choosing the best cookware. As a long-time reader, I thought you did your homework before approaching these topics. You missed it

here. No one can hold an angle by hand properly. Lubricating a stone is a no-no. A single bevel is amateur and inferior to a double bevel or hollow ground. Many of these points were proven in the '70s using scanning electron micrographs to visualize the knife's edge. The company that did the work was Razor Edge Systems, Inc. (RESI) of Ely, Minnesota (www.razoredgesystems.com).

A jig is necessary to get the proper angle, and this facilitates getting a double edge. While I confess to using a Chef's Choice sharpener for routine touchups, I get the best edge following the steps developed by RESI. I strongly recommend that anyone interested in achieving an edge you can shave with consult this company and the tools they sell.

—Tom Proch, via e-mail ♦

Getting the most from *Fine Cooking's* recipes

When you cook from a *Fine Cooking* recipe, we want you to get as good a result as we did in our test kitchen, so we recommend that you follow the guidelines below in addition to the recipe instructions.

Before you start to cook, read the recipe completely. Gather the ingredients and prepare them as directed in the recipe list before proceeding to the method. Give your oven plenty of time to heat to the temperature in the recipe; use an oven thermometer to check.

Always start checking for doneness a few minutes before the suggested time in the recipe. For meat and poultry, use an instant-read thermometer.

In baking recipes especially, the amounts of some ingredients (flour, butter, nuts, etc.) are listed by weight (pounds, ounces) and by volume (cups, tablespoons). Professional bakers measure by weight for consistent results, but we list volume measures too because not many home cooks have scales (although we highly recommend them—see *Fine Cooking* #13, p. 68, and #17, p. 62).

To measure flour by volume, stir the flour and then lightly spoon it into a dry measure and level it with a knife; don't shake or tap the cup. Measure liquids in glass or plastic liquid measuring cups.

Unless otherwise noted, assume that

- ◆ Butter is unsalted.
- ◆ Eggs are large (about 2 ounces each).
- ◆ Flour is all-purpose (don't sift unless directed to).
- ◆ Sugar is granulated.
- ◆ Garlic, onions, and fresh ginger are peeled.
- ◆ Fresh herbs, greens, and lettuces are washed and dried.

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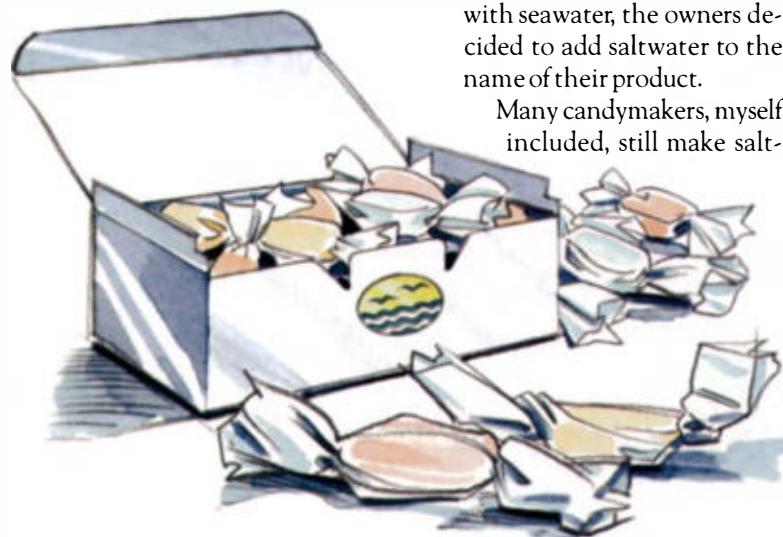
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*Jan Birnbaum, proprietor of Sazerac in Seattle, WA, and Catahoula in Calistoga, CA.
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Have a question of general interest about cooking? Send it to Q&A, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, and we'll find a cooking professional with the answer.



water taffy using the old-fashioned "open fire" method. Sugar and corn syrup are put in a copper kettle, along with salt, water, and solid vegetable fat. The mixture is boiled to a certain temperature—somewhere around 250°F, depending on the temperature of the workspace—and then it's dumped onto a special cooling table.

When the candy has cooled enough—there's no precise temperature, but an expert candymaker can tell by touch when it's ready—the taffy is pulled. The pulling incorpo-

Saltwater taffy

Is there saltwater in saltwater taffy?

—Laura Bergeron, Newtown, CT

Tom Ibach replies: There's no saltwater from the ocean, if that's what you mean. But there is both salt and water in saltwater taffy. There are many theories about how this soft, chewy candy got its name, but the story that was passed down to me traces the name back to a seaside taffy shop in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Supposedly, when a bad storm left the shop flooded with seawater, the owners decided to add saltwater to the name of their product.

Many candymakers, myself included, still make salt-

rates tiny air bubbles, which lighten the color and soften the texture. In the old days, my grandfather would heave a 20-pound batch of taffy onto a special hook on the wall and stretch it by hand. Our concession to technology is to use a mechanical pulling machine. We put the taffy on hooks and add flavoring and color, and the machine pulls the candy to the size and shape we want.

Tom Ibach is the owner of Dolle's Candyland and Ibach's Candy By The Sea in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware.

How to prevent *pad thai* noodles from clumping up

I love pad thai, but every time I make it, the noodles clump together, no matter how much oil I use. Can you help?

—Nancy Brady Stevens, Brussels, Belgium

Su Mei Yu replies: The Asian rice noodles used in *pad thai* can be tricky to stir-fry. The starch in these noodles is sensitive to very high temperatures and hot oil; too much of either one can result in a knot of sticky, clumped noodles rather than the loosely tangled mess that you're aiming for. Here's how to avoid the sticky-noodle syndrome.

Prepare the noodles for cooking by softening them in lukewarm water until they're pliable. Rinse them in cool water to rid them of excess starch and dry them well; cover them so they stay moist.

When you're ready to stir-fry the noodles, have nearby a bowl of water or a flavorful liquid (I combine $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup tamarind juice, and 1 tablespoon light brown sugar). Heat a wok or skillet on high and add a small

amount of oil (3 or 4 tablespoons); use this hot oil to sauté minced garlic. Reduce the heat to medium high, add the noodles along with a tablespoon or two of the water or other liquid, and stir with a paddle or spatula to loosen the strands (avoid using tongs). If the noodles begin to clump, don't reach for more oil. Instead, add 1 or 2 more tablespoons of the liquid and keep stirring. When you add the liquid, it should sizzle instantly. If it doesn't, raise the heat. If the heat is too low, the noodles will be soggy.

Cook the noodles until they're soft, adding small amounts of liquid whenever the noodles start to stick together. Then add the remaining ingredients in your recipe. *Su Mei Yu's recipe for pad thai appeared in Fine Cooking #21. Her book on traditional Thai cooking, called Cracking the Coconut, is due out this summer from William Morrow.*

The right way to dispose of used cooking oil

After deep-frying food, I'm never sure how to get rid of the used oil. Is it a crime to pour it down the sink?

—Henry Lawlor, Providence, RI

John Martin Taylor replies: I'm often faced with this situation since deep-frying is one of my favorite ways of cooking. Pouring used cooking oil down the sink with hot water is definitely *not* the way to go—it's environmentally unsound and might clog up your pipes. In most cases, the best thing to do is to wait for the oil to cool, pour it back into its original container (or something similar), and

discard it with your household garbage.

If you want to go a step further, call your local sanitation department and ask for more specific instructions; at this point, few cities have set up vegetable oil recycling programs for individuals, although many cities require restaurants to recycle their discarded grease. (In Chicago, that grease is converted into a fuel that powers city buses.) *John Martin Taylor is the author of The Fearless Frying Cookbook (Workman).*

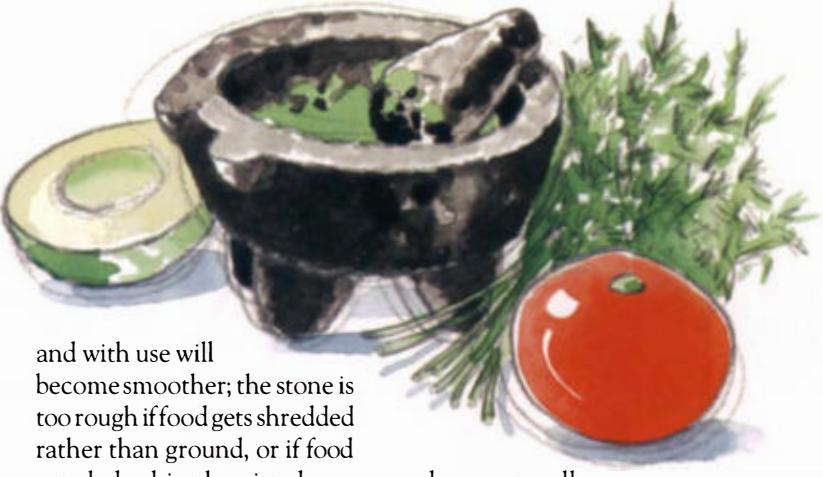
Using a Mexican mortar and pestle

I have a Mexican molcajete, but when I use it, my mixtures end up gritty. Why would this

happen? Is there a proper technique for using it?

—James R. Buschmann,
Detroit, MI

Jim Peyton replies: A *molcajete* is a Mexican mortar used for grinding spices, blending chile sauces, and mashing guacamole. To use it, a cook grinds the mixture with a pestle, called a *tejolote*, using a light pressure: the weight of the pestle and the texture of the stone should do most of the work. A good-quality *molcajete* is shaped from black or gray volcanic rock, which is dense, hard, and reasonably smooth. It shouldn't crumble or shed bits of stone or grit into the food. Lesser quality *molcajetes* are coarser but usable,



and with use will become smoother; the stone is too rough if food gets shredded rather than ground, or if food gets lodged in the pitted surface. To break in a new *molcajete*, scrub it well and then grind a handful of rice in it; repeat as necessary. This helps smooth the surface and rubs away any loose particles.

If you find that your mixtures are getting gritty, your *molcajete* may have been intended primarily for decorative purposes or as a serving dish for guacamole and salsas. Many of these *molcajetes* are made of a soft, brittle stone

and are not well finished. Some are even made from cement-based materials that are poured into molds. Any *molcajete* that has a very porous or rough surface, or one that is light gray in color (indicating it might be made of concrete) may not be well-suited to grinding food. *Jim Peyton has written several books about Mexican food, including New Cooking from Old Mexico (Red Crane Books).* ♦

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Pain au levain covers a range of breads with one trait in common: all are leavened with a natural starter of wild yeasts and bacteria. This starter is “fed” in the bakery through regularly scheduled additions of flour and water. Pain au levain usually comes in large, round loaves.

Sourdough is also a pretty wide classification. Sourdough usually refers to the classic San Francisco style sourdough bread made with unbleached wheat flour and a starter with bacteria and yeasts that were first identified in the San Francisco Bay area, although there are delicious German-style sourdough wheat and rye breads, too. Sourdough bread often has a blistered crust with reddish-yellow tones. It has a distinct, sour flavor that's a byproduct of fermentation and is almost vinegary-tasting. If lactic or acetic acid are on the package's ingredient list, it isn't the real thing.



Selecting Authentic, Well-Crafted Artisan Bread

Once available only in major cities, artisan breads and their imitators are now made and sold throughout the United States. By artisan bread, I mean bread made as it has been for centuries, by trained hands. The dough must:

- ◆ contain only flour, water, salt, and leavening (supplemental ingredients, such as walnuts or olives, are fine),
- ◆ undergo lengthy fermentation,
- ◆ be baked directly on a masonry hearth.

The result of these methods is usually bread with more flavor, better texture, and a crustier crust.

Many bakeries and large-scale grocery stores sell bread they call “artisan” but really only offer loaves made from mixes and bases that are baked on or in pans in convection ovens. Others advertise “baked fresh daily,” but only thaw and heat partially baked bread. That said, there is a lot of good bread out there. Here's how to identify a loaf of authentic handmade bread.

Winter wheat flour and a starter are key

Identifying authentic examples of good handmade bread can be confusing because some bakeries, in the name of creativity, play fast

and loose with traditional terms. More common than blatant misnamings are breads that are the correct shapes but use the same dough for several supposedly very different breads. Taste is subjective, of course, but there are objective standards that can be applied to bread.

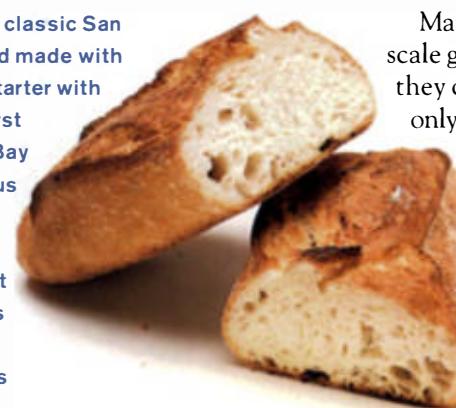
Although artisan bread is made with the hands, some machinery can be used, and certain artisan breads (such as French pain de mie, the rectangular loaf baked in a squared-off pan) can be baked on the hearth with the support of a pan and still be called artisan.

Artisan bakers generally use flour from hard winter wheat (rather than hard spring wheat) because the protein quality of winter wheat flour results in dough that will stretch well during shaping and rising. Dough from winter wheat flour will ferment more readily, giving bread with better texture and better flavor.

Most top-quality artisan breads contain a starter in the form of a yeast sponge or a bakery-maintained starter that's added to or “fed” on a regular schedule. These pre-ferments give a more complex flavor, better texture, and longer-lasting freshness.

Oven conditions make a difference

The essentials for good artisan bread aren't a wood fire





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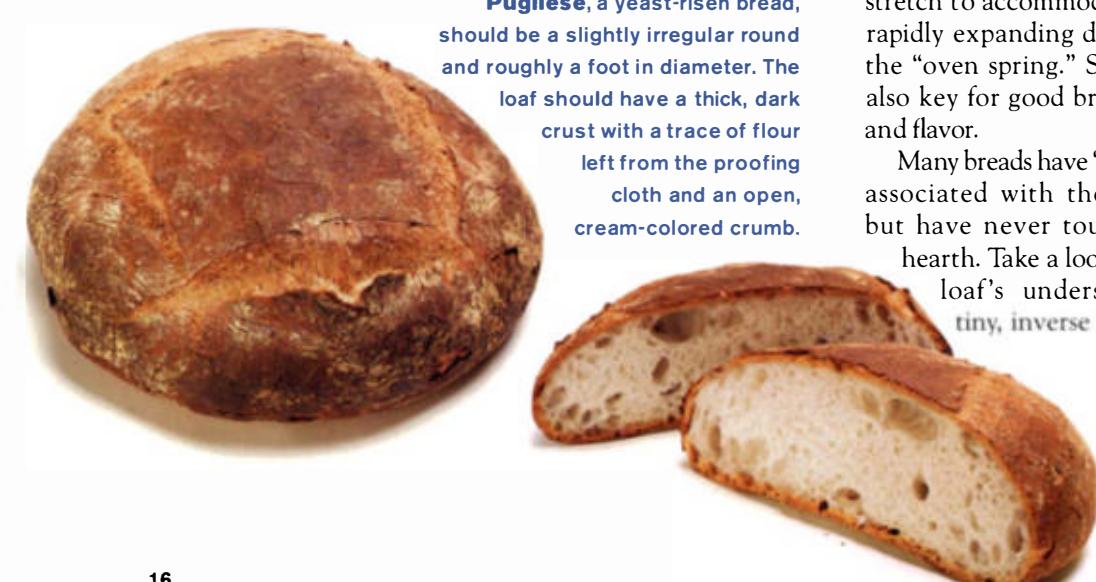
AT THE MARKET



A classic **baguette** contains flour, water, salt, yeast, and nothing extra. It should be 18 to 30 inches long and weigh between 9 and 12 ounces. The crumb should be very open (though not as extreme as a ciabatta), the crust a rich golden brown, with five to seven similarly sized overlapping cuts on the top of the loaf. The thin edge of the cut should stand a touch above the rest of the loaf.



Ciabatta is usually made with flour, salt, water, and yeast; some bakers add olive oil, too. It has a dull, tannish-brown crust, with a striated appearance because of the flour used to keep the wet dough from sticking to the bench and proofing cloth. Loaves should be more flat than high. The bread should have big alveoles and lots of them.



Pugliese, a yeast-risen bread, should be a slightly irregular round and roughly a foot in diameter. The loaf should have a thick, dark crust with a trace of flour left from the proofing cloth and an open, cream-colored crumb.

and European bricks. Good artisan bread requires the following.

◆ **Radiant heat** rather than convection. While convection is great for evenly browned pastry, radiant heat results in the color gradations and variations that are a part of what give artisan bread its visual appeal and complex flavors.

◆ **Baking directly on the hearth** so heat transfers rapidly, helping loaves bake quickly and thoroughly. Bricks aren't absolutely necessary. In addition, "stone hearth" has a romantic ring to it, but most often this really means a hearth of heat-tolerant cement that's specially made for bread ovens.

◆ **Adequate thermal mass** to keep the oven temperature from dropping too much when bread is loaded into the oven. Insufficient oven heat can give a pale crust, gummy insides, and less volume. (Too much heat can yield gummy insides, too, with a burned crust.)

◆ **Steam in the baking chamber**, which allows the exposed dough surface to remain soft during the early minutes of baking so it can stretch to accommodate the rapidly expanding dough—the "oven spring." Steam is also key for good browning and flavor.

Many breads have "hearth" associated with the name but have never touched a

hearth. Take a look at the loaf's underside. If tiny, inverse dimples

cover the surface, the bread was baked in a perforated pan, and likely in a convection oven.

Visual cues reveal good workmanship

There's a lot you can tell about a loaf of bread before you bite into it. Ingredients, loaf size, shape, and color all give hints of inner qualities. A glimpse of a loaf's crumb reveals even more.

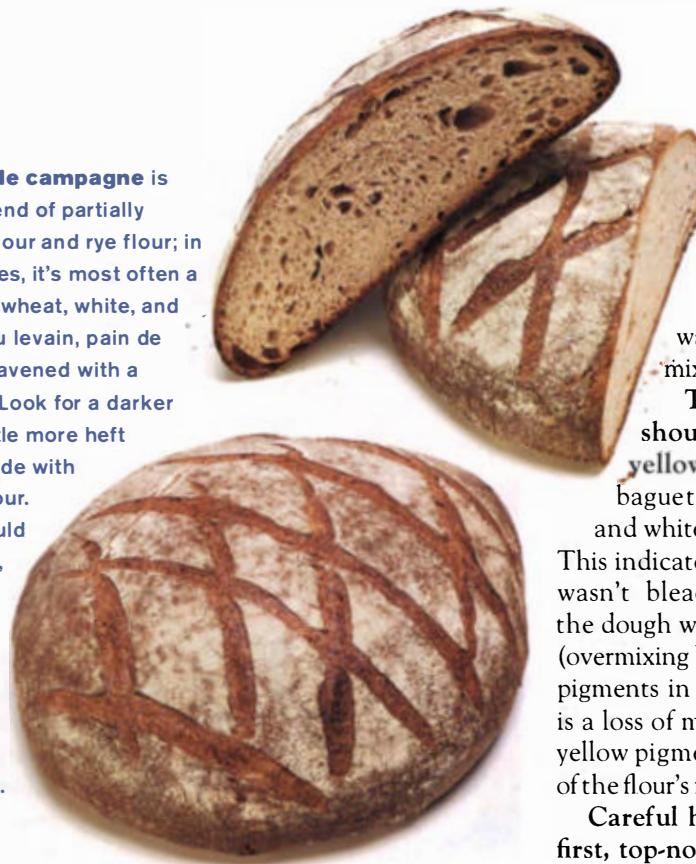
A loaf of artisan bread should be **symmetrical and seamless**, which indicates skillful shaping. Except for ciabatta, shaped loaves should be a relaxed horizontal oval in cross section, rather than a tight circle or tense vertical oval, which can indicate too dry a dough or insufficient rising time.

The crust should be a rich **golden brown**, which contributes a delicious, complex flavor and crisp, not leathery texture. (Know that whole-grain breads will be crisp for only the briefest time after being peeled out of the oven.) The larger the loaf, the darker the crust can and should be, because a larger loaf of bread takes longer to bake.

Razor cuts, which allow the bread to rise evenly in the oven and for the crumb to open, should show a gradation of colors, each of which carries slightly different flavors. If the dough looks quite convex at the cuts, this usually means insufficient rising time and that the bread was likely made from a stiff, dry dough.

Crumb structure should be **relatively open**, with holes (alveoles) of varying sizes, although this will vary somewhat depending on the type of bread. The insides of the alveoles should be glossy, not chalky. If you push on the center of the cut loaf, the

The best **pain de campagne** is made with a blend of partially refined wheat flour and rye flour; in the United States, it's most often a blend of whole-wheat, white, and rye. Like **pain au levain**, **pain de campagne** is leavened with a natural starter. Look for a darker crumb and a little more heft than breads made with mostly white flour. The crumb should have lots of big, irregularly shaped holes that come from a wet dough, lengthy fermentation, and gentle handling.



crumb should bounce back to its original position. If it compresses, the loaf was underbaked and probably wasn't thoroughly mixed or fermented.

The crumb color should be a creamy yellow for ciabatta, baguettes, sourdough, and white **pain au levain**.

This indicates that the flour wasn't bleached and that the dough wasn't overmixed (overmixing bleaches out the pigments in the flour). This is a loss of more than color: yellow pigments carry much of the flour's flavor, too.

Careful handling comes first, top-notch ingredients are a close second, and a

combination of the two is ideal. Because skilled, experienced craftsmanship is so crucial to good bread, choice of flour, proper mixing, adequate fermentation, skilled handling and shaping, thorough proofing, and proper baking are actually more critical to making good bread than using organic flour made from heirloom wheat, natural starters, and a wood-fired brick oven. Both are important, though—and when you get them together, you get great bread.

*Thom Leonard, a baker from Lawrence, Kansas, is the author of *The Bread Book*. He's on the advisory board of *The Bread Bakers Guild of America* and works with Farm to Market Bread Company in Kansas City, Missouri. ♦*

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How to Roll and Shape Pie Crust

If you ask my pastry students what's the most daunting aspect of making pie crust, I believe the answer would be rolling out the crust. I give them many little suggestions and hints, but the major piece of advice I offer is this: buy a pastry cloth and a cover for your rolling pin and then "roll around the clock."

Start with rested dough

Before you begin rolling, you obviously need to make your dough. Whatever recipe you are using (see *Fine Cooking* #35, p. 18, for my flaky pie crust dough), the pastry should be shaped into a disk and refrigerated for at least 30 minutes before rolling. This rest allows the fat to firm up, the liquid to permeate the dough, and the gluten to relax, all of which makes the rolling go more smoothly.

Choose your tools

A flat surface and a rolling pin are the obvious tools for rolling out pie crust.

For your surface, your main goal is a lot of space. A marble counter is not essential. In fact, my choice for a rolling surface is a large wooden pastry board. Secure it to the counter by placing a damp towel or a nonskid mat underneath.

For my rolling pin, I like a heavy, wooden ball-bearing pin with a 12-inch barrel and handles. The weight helps do some of the work for you, while the ball bearings facilitate longer, smoother strokes. A straight pin offers a more

controlled roll, but it takes more experience to evenly flatten the dough with one.

Cloth makes the dough a cinch to roll. Rolling out your pastry on a well-floured heavy pastry cloth (a crease-free linen dishtowel would also work) keeps the dough from sticking and makes it easier to handle. For the same reason, I also fit a floured knit stocking or cover over my rolling pin. (For sources for pastry cloths and pin covers, see p. 84.)

A pastry cloth won't skid on wood or plastic, but if you're rolling on a slippery surface, such as granite or Formica, you'll need to bring the cloth forward so that you can lean against it and hold it in place as you roll.

The key to a perfect circle

Truth be told, a perfect circle isn't really necessary, since you almost always trim the circle. But I've seen some people roll out dough that in no way resembles a circle, and this becomes a problem when you try to fit the dough in the pie pan.

Roll "around the clock" to flatten the dough evenly. When I roll, I think of the circle of dough as the face of a clock. My first four rolls, all starting from the center, go first to 12 o'clock, then to 6 o'clock, over to 3 o'clock, and finally to 9 o'clock. After those initial strokes, I roll around the clock at "hourly" intervals until my circle has stretched to the size I want.

Roll "around the clock" for a circle of even thickness



Position the rolling pin in the center of the dough and begin by rolling upward to 12 o'clock. Move the pin back to the center and then roll down to 6 o'clock, and side to side to 3 and 9 o'clock (as shown). A floured pastry cloth and linen pin cover are added protection against sticking.



Rotate the dough a quarter turn every so often as you continue to roll the dough at "hourly" increments.



Continue rolling until the dough has reached the desired size. Lessen the pressure on the pin as you near the periphery of the circle to avoid rolling the edges too thin.

This way, I can keep track of where I'm rolling and won't favor one area over another.

Some other rolling tips:

- ◆ **If the dough isn't spreading, stop rolling.** The dough has likely stuck to the surface; use a pastry scraper to carefully pick it up and then re-flour the surface underneath.
- ◆ **Lighten up on the rolling pin as you reach the edges of the circle.** Otherwise, your edges will become too thin.
- ◆ **Give the pastry a quarter turn frequently.** Most people

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Use the pin to move the dough



Begin with the pin 4 inches in from the far side of the pastry circle. Use the pastry cloth to flip the edge of the pastry circle onto the pin. Wrap the dough around the pin until only a few inches of dough remain.



Lift the pastry up and start unrolling the dough over the buttered pie plate. Leave a 2-inch overhang at the edge of the pan closest to you.



Moving the pin away from you, drape the pastry loosely over the pie pan. This is where a near-perfect circle pays off.

Fit the pastry to the pan



Mold the dough into the crease of the pan. With your fingers, gently push the dough down toward the crease, being careful not to stretch the dough.



Press the dough to build a wall of pastry. For the crust to retain its shape, the wall should be extended to the outer rim of the pan.

apply pressure on their dominant side; rotating the dough avoids this favoritism.

♦ **To even out irregularities, angle the end of the rolling pin toward the area that needs filling.** This should ease the dough to where it needs to be.

Lining the pie pan

Moving the pie crust from the work surface to the pie plate can be a breath-holding experience. Some people fold the crust in quarters and unfold it over the pie plate. I roll mine around the pin and then carefully unroll it over the plate (see the photos at left).

I generally bake my pies in an ovenproof glass pie plate. Glass is an excellent conductor of heat, and the bottom of the pie can easily be checked for browning.

Always butter the pie plate and rim before lining it with pastry. Greasing the dish holds the pastry in place, decreases shrinkage, and encourages browning.

Drape the pastry over the plate, fitting it loosely at first and then pressing the dough into the crease of the pie pan. For the best shape, don't stretch the dough to fit; bring in some of the overhang if

necessary to give you enough slack to reach the crease of the plate.

Use scissors to trim the dough. For double-crust pies, in which the top crust is turned under the bottom pastry, the bottom crust needs to hang over the edge of the plate by $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch, while the top needs $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 inch.

Single-crust pies always need the most overhang—also known as selvage—to give you enough pastry to fold over to form a double thickness of dough for height and extra support at the lip (see the photos below). This is especially important when the crust is to be filled before baking: the weight of the filling can draw the crust in.

Seal the edge simply by crimping or fluting. My biggest concern when making a pie crust is that it be tender and flaky. Pies with highly sculpted edges are pretty, but to make a dough strong enough to withstand braiding and whatnot, tenderness and flavor often get sacrificed. I think of pies as a casual dessert, and I like to keep their "homemade" look using a method like the one shown at left. For a double-crust pie, create an edge that will keep the filling in, such as pressing the two crusts together with a fork at regular intervals.

Chill your pie before baking. All pie crusts, whether they're to be filled first or blind-baked, hold their shape best in the oven if they're chilled for half an hour before baking. When the pastry begins to get firm, you can redefine any decorative edging to give the crust a more pronounced design.



Make a simple pointed flute. With your knuckle, push the dough out to form a point as you push in with the thumb and bent forefinger of the other hand. Repeat at 1-inch intervals.

Carole Walter wrote *Great Pies & Tarts and Great Cakes* (both from Clarkson Potter). ♦

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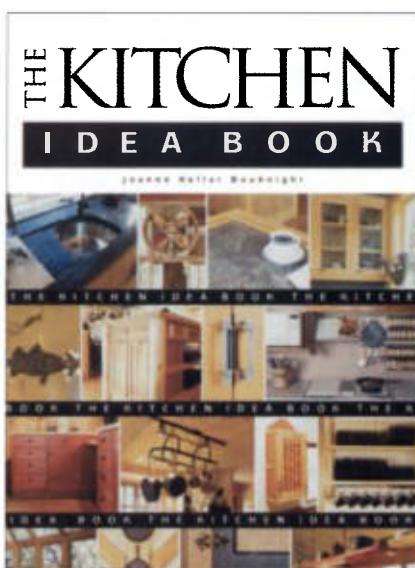
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Kosher Wines Are World-Class Finds



The kosher wine from the Passovers of my childhood tasted more like Robitussin than table wine: treacly purple, poured from a screw-top bottle, and made from Concord grapes, it was wine to be tolerated, not savored. It sure isn't what lured me into the wine and food business.

So I was flabbergasted recently at a tasting in New York when I came across some seriously delicious wines from Australia, California, Chile, Israel, and France—including bottlings of esteemed Bordeaux and Champagne—that just happened to be kosher.

Made under strict supervision

Wine has long played a part in Jewish ritual (especially sweet wine, which is possibly why kosher wines have had such a bad rap).

Like all fine wines, kosher wines are made under the watch of a skilled winemaker.

But the wines we're talking about here are from the same varietals as their non-kosher cousins, not from table grapes. The only difference is that kosher wines, like other kosher foods, need to be made under strict rabbinical supervision and according to Jewish religious and dietary laws. After the grapes are picked, only strictly Sabbath-observant Jews can handle the wine and the equipment.

In addition, wine that's kosher for Passover must have no contact with wheat, grain, dough, or leavens. Wine yeast is okay as long as it's certified kosher. Refining agents can't be animal-based—kosher fish gelatin or a powdered clay called bentonite is used instead of gelatin or egg whites.

In Israel, kosher growing laws are especially firm. Vines can't be harvested until their fourth year and the vineyard, if within the Biblical portion of Israel, must be left fallow every seven years.

Kosher wine is often flash-pasteurized. This makes the wine *mevushal*, which means that it can remain kosher even if handled by non-Jews (this would be im-

Delicious kosher wines for Passover and beyond

Whether you keep a kosher household, plan to attend or prepare a Passover seder, or just like good wines, consider trying some of these. "There was a time when finding kosher wines we were comfortable selling on their own merits was tough," says Peter Granoff, proprietor of wine.com, an online wine retailer. Granoff, who stocks kosher wines year-round, insists that "they have to be good enough to be enjoyed by wine drinkers for whom kosher status isn't an issue."

Recently I sat down with a couple of colleagues to taste an assortment of kosher wines. Here's what we chose for delicious drinking any time. Retail prices are approximate.

portant at, say, an orthodox bar mitzvah or wedding held at a kosher facility. If a wine isn't *mevushal*, only Jewish waiters can pour it). Some feel that *mevushal* wines lose some of their subtleties in the flash-pasteurizing process, but there's also research indicating that such brief heating and rapid cooling doesn't rob flavors and may actually enhance them.

Amy Albert is an associate editor for *Fine Cooking*. ♦

Champagne

Laurent-Perrier non-vintage Brut L.P. (France).

The kosher batch made at this well-regarded Champagne house is as easy to drink as its non-kosher bottlings—crisp, light, and refreshing. \$55.

Laurent-Perrier Rosé (France).

Like all good rosé Champagnes, this one is a delicious splurge and an extremely versatile food partner. \$65

Jeanmaire Brut (France).

Fruity aromas and a light, fresh, straightforward style. \$42.

White wines

1998 Chablis Domaine de la Tortue (France). Crisp and lively with minerally flavors and a round finish. Less austere than many other Chablis we've tasted. \$30.

1998 Weinstock Cellars Contour Chenin Blanc (California). Lovely pineappley fruit flavors with a long, dry finish. \$10.

1997 Yarden Galilee Chardonnay (Israel). A big, buttery mouthful, this wine needs food. It was good with gefilte fish (the traditional Passover whitefish dumplings) and would go well with salmon, sole, and roast chicken, too. \$15.

1999 Teal Lake Chardonnay (Australia). Elegant, medium-bodied, and restrained, with refreshing apricot notes and a dry finish. \$12.

1997 Herzog Late Harvest Johannisberg Riesling (Monterey, California). A delicious dessert wine with lively acidity balancing dried apricot and butterscotch flavors. A glass of this could be dessert all by itself. \$17.

1995 Château Giscours (Bordeaux). An elegant, powerful third-growth Margaux, and a red-meat wine for sure. Drink it with seared lamb chops, filet, duck, or sirloin—a few years from now. \$51.

Red wines

1997 Château de Paraza Minervois (Languedoc-Roussillon). Aromas of fruit jam with ripe, full-bodied fruit. A good partner for leg of lamb. \$11.

1996 Château La Rèze Minervois (Languedoc-Roussillon). With aromas of earth and licorice, this ripe, full-bodied red would be great with grilled chicken or lamb chops. \$10.

1998 Hagafen Pinot Noir (Napa). Medium-bodied and well-balanced, with yummy red fruit flavors balanced by light tannins. A versatile crowd-pleaser and a bargain at \$16.

1997 Alfasi Reserve Merlot (Chile). Dry, fruity and full-bodied; a good match for beef stews and braises. \$10.

1999 Teal Lake Shiraz (South-east Australia). This big-boy Shiraz (the grape also known as Syrah) has raisiny and almost meaty aromas. Great with grilled meats. \$12.

1995 Château Labégorce (Bordeaux). This Margaux has an intense bouquet that's rich with cherry aromas. Full-bodied with big tannins, it's one to lay down and drink in a couple of years. An excellent value. \$32.

Helpful books for aspiring chefs

Whether you're dreaming of a culinary career or you're already working behind the stove, you'll find both inspiration and a good dose of reality in two recently published books about succeeding as a chef: *The Making of a Pastry Chef*, by Andrew MacLauchlan (John Wiley & Sons), and *If You Can Stand the Heat*, by Dawn Davis (Penguin).

MacLauchlan, the executive pastry chef of Coyote Café, tells the inside story of becoming a successful pastry chef through interviews with his peers, including Bill Yosses, Jacques Torres, Nancy Silverton, Emily Luchetti, and Gale Gand. While the book is full of honest advice based on hard-won lessons (whether to go to culinary school, how long to stay at a job, how to handle the long hours and physical work), it also delivers a good dose of passion, with fifty recipes to illus-

trate the chefs' love of the art and devotion to the best-quality ingredients.

Davis's book focuses even more deeply on chefs' personal stories. Reading about Anne Kearney's struggle to manage her budget, cover her payroll, and simply get customers in the front door as she takes command of her own restaurant makes me want to make a reservation at Peristyle (which is now quite successful) in New Orleans. Other stories—Thomas Keller started his working life as a dishwasher; Patricia Williams had a successful career as a ballerina before switching from dancing to cooking—give a well-rounded picture of the varied roads chefs travel to success. *If You Can Stand the Heat* also includes recipes, source information on food

organizations and culinary scholarships, and chapters on how to work as a personal chef and in the catering business.

And if these two books pique your interest in the culinary life, be sure to check out two other good books published in the last several years as a result of the burgeoning culinary business: *The Making of a Chef: Mastering Heat at the Culinary Institute of America*, by Michael Ruhlman (Owl Books) and *Becoming a Chef*, a very thorough primer by Andrew Dornenburg and Karen Page (John Wiley & Sons). Then for serious research on which culinary program or classes to choose, consult www.shawguides.com for complete listings of recreational and professional courses.

—Susie Middleton, associate editor



Mini bowls are handy for prep

I'll admit I have a "little bowl" fetish. There's nothing that makes me happier than having all the ingredients for a dish I'm about to prepare lined up in little bowls around me. Say I'm making a stir-fry for dinner. I use a stainless-steel mixing bowl to hold marinating beef strips and another for broccoli pieces. But what about that little bit of minced garlic, the tablespoon of chopped ginger, the half-cup of peanuts, the handful of bean sprouts? I only need little bowls for these.

Over the years I've kept my eyes open for handy little bowls just for this purpose, and when I find some, I buy several. One version I find useful is a sturdy, stackable, dishwasher-safe glass bowl that comes in

graduated sizes. I like the really small 2 1/4-inch-wide one for spices and pastes and the 3-inch one for nuts, chopped olives, sun-dried tomatoes, etc. Look for these bowls (made by J. G. Durand) in kitchen and home stores, or

you can now buy them online from www.kitchenetc.com for 89¢ and 99¢ each.

I found an unbreakable alternative at Crate & Barrel. These 3-inch-wide stainless-steel bowls stack neatly and clean easily. They're 95¢ each

in Crate & Barrel stores (or www.crateandbarrel.com). Another handy container is available from King Arthur Flour's Baker's Catalogue (800/827-6836). It's a version of a restaurant "condiment" cup (which King Arthur calls an ingredient cup), and it has a capacity of 3 1/2 tablespoons. These cups are available as a set of ten for \$5.95. —S. M.



She Turned Her Passion For Cooking Into A Profitable Business!

Have utensils, will travel could be Susan Titcomb's motto. Twelve years ago, Titcomb, a 39 year old mother from San Diego, California, had a passion for cooking and a desire to control her own destiny. Armed with an idea, her husband's support, very little capital and virtually no business experience, she started the country's first personal chef service. Personally Yours Personal Chef Service became an overnight success and spurred her on to become a cofounder of the United States Personal Chef Association. "A personal chef can make \$35,000 to \$50,000 a year, depending upon the hours worked and the number of clients," says Titcomb. Since most clients work full-time, Titcomb goes into their home and cooks 10 meals for the whole family. Her service includes grocery shopping, preparation, cooking, packaging and cleanup. With a cost as low as \$8 per meal, per person, Titcomb has a long waiting list. So what does it take to become a personal chef? "Organization, persistence, a love of cooking and a little know how," says Titcomb. *For more information, call the United States Personal Chef Association at: 1-800-995-2138 or go to <http://www.uspca.com>.*



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Try a hollow-edged slicing knife for ham and other delicate meats

If you've ever shredded meat when you've meant to slice it, you might want to try a knife with a special edge. This slicing knife has a long, rigid blade that features hollowed-out ovals spaced evenly along it. The special edge reduces friction and traps juices to help the knife glide through meat cleanly. Since it's so effective on ham, the knife is sometimes called a ham slicer. More often it's identified as a Kullenschliff slicer (*kullen* is the German word for hollow), and almost



every major knife manufacturer makes at least one knife with this type of edge. (You might also notice the *kullen* edge on salmon slicers, which are very skinny, long flexible knives for cutting thin slices of smoked salmon.)

LamsonSharp's 8-inch Kullenschliff carver (above left, \$64.95) and Wüsthof-Trident's 10-inch ham slicer (above right, \$82.50) are available from Professional Cutlery Direct, 800/859-6994. —S. M.

Picture-perfect mushrooms by mail

The first time I tasted the mushrooms cultivated by Gourmet Mushrooms, Inc., of Sebastopol, California, they were grilled over a wood-burning fire by a professional chef. We savored the skewered mushrooms while dining outside at a winery overlooking the hills of Sonoma County. I had to wonder: Would the same mushrooms taste as wonderful cooked by me without the fire or the view?

I found out by ordering one of the two beautiful baskets of fresh mushrooms

offered by this pioneer of exotic mushroom cultivation. For \$45.85 (which includes shipping), you get about two pounds of the most beautiful mushrooms you've ever seen. With the exception of a few detached caps, they arrived in pristine shape. My basket came with eight different varieties, all cultivated (and some trademarked) by Gourmet Mushrooms. (In season, a basket might also include hand-picked wild mushrooms as well.)

An enclosed color pamphlet offers general cooking directions for each variety, as well as a perishability guide.

This is something to be aware of:

Order these mushrooms to arrive on the day (or the day before) you plan to use them; some of the varieties will keep three to five days, but many should be used as soon as possible.

To appreciate their flavor most simply, I quickly broiled black oysters, blue oysters, shiitake, and cinnamon caps, seasoned only with a little olive oil, salt, and pepper. The result was wholly satisfying: juicy, meaty, and silky, each variety



Find out-of-print cookbooks on the Internet

For the last few years, I've been collecting individual volumes of the out-of-print *Good Cook* series, a 28-book set on cooking technique published by Time Life 20 years ago. The search was slow-going but pleasurable. I loved that victorious moment when I spied a missing title in a used bookstore.

Then I woke up to the power of the Internet. Starting at www.alibris.com, a searchable database of titles from booksellers around the world, I typed in "Time Life Good Cook," and pow!—so many listings that I could have completed my set within the hour.

If you've been hunting for a first American edition of Elizabeth David's *French Country Cooking* or one of Jane Grigson's classics, you'll likely find it using alibris, or else try www.biblio.com, www.bookavenue.com, www.antiqbook.com, www.bookfinder.com, or www.abebook.com. Or go to www.addall.com, which searches several of these sites at once.

The specifics of searching and ordering differ on each site, but the result is the same: you can find out who has what and then compare prices (remember to include shipping charges, which vary by bookseller). If you don't get an immediate hit, most of these sites let you place a "want," which logs your request and notifies you by e-mail when it appears in the database.

I'm still missing four titles in the *Good Cook* series, but only because I like having an excuse to browse used bookstores—I've decided I'm not ready to give up the thrill of the hunt.

—Sarah Jay, associate editor

contributing its own flavor to the delicious mix. Despite the price tag, I would order these mushrooms again; they're worth it. In fact, I might try the bigger basket (four pounds for \$67.85) and split it with a friend for a little better value. For more information, call 707/823-1743.

—Joanne McAllister Smart, associate editor

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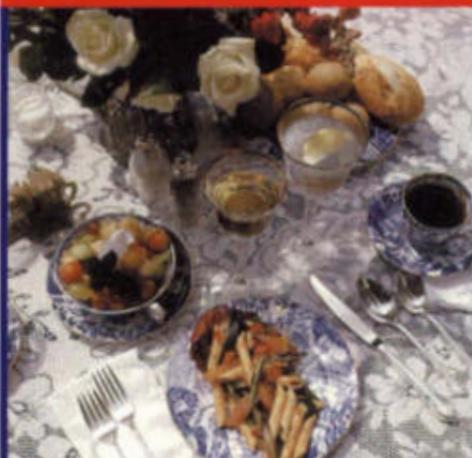


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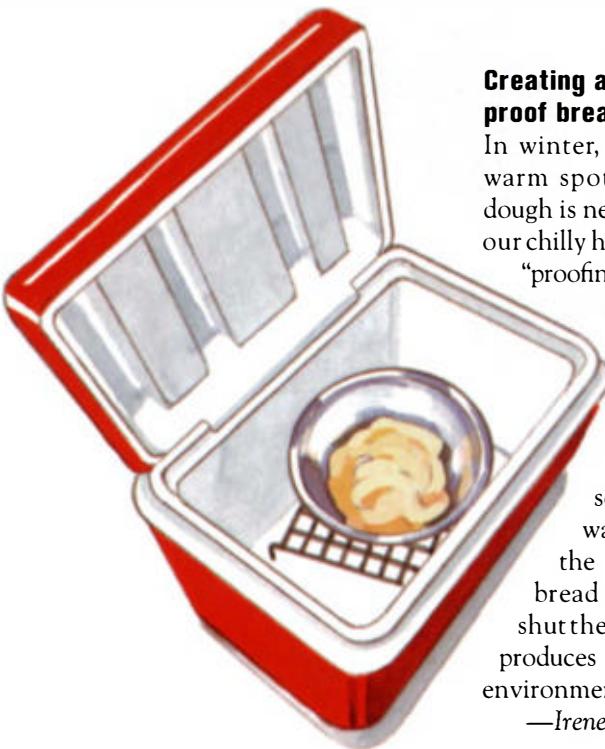
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Do you have a better way to clean fresh greens, a neat trick for handling sticky bread dough, or a new way to use an old kitchen tool? Write to Tips, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506. Or send your tip by e-mail to fc@taunton.com. We pay for tips we publish.



Proof dough on a rack in a picnic cooler, kept warm with hot water poured in the bottom.

Make your own buttermilk

In the Technique Class on pancakes in *Fine Cooking* #34, you mention that whole milk can be used if buttermilk isn't available. My suggestion is to make a quickie buttermilk yourself: add 1 tablespoon of lemon or lime juice to 1 cup of room-temperature whole milk. Let sit for 5 minutes, and you have sour milk, which can be substituted for buttermilk in your pancake recipe and in many others as well.

—Dale Conoscenti,
Montpelier, VT

Creating a warm spot to proof bread

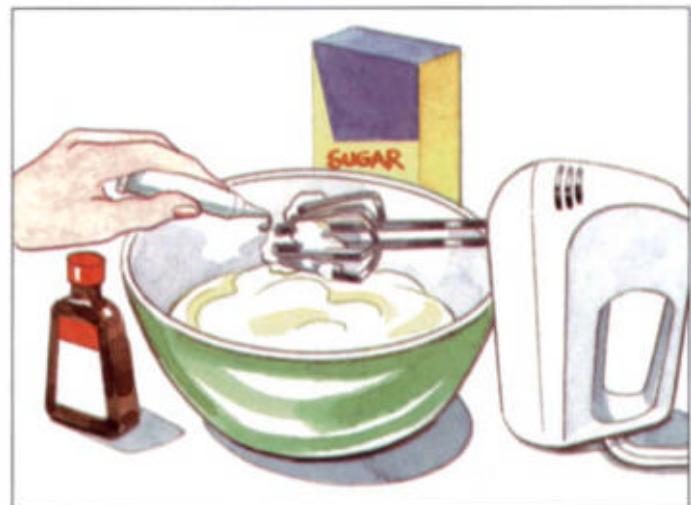
In winter, finding a moist, warm spot to proof bread dough is nearly impossible in our chilly house. So I create a "proofing box" by pouring about a quart of very hot or boiling water into a large picnic cooler. I set a rack in the cooler so it sits above the water, and then I set the bowl with the bread dough inside and shut the lid. I find that this produces a perfect proofing environment.

—Irene Sturges, via e-mail

Squeeze more than garlic in a garlic press

When I want to add an extra boost of flavor to a soup, sauce, or salad dressing, I reach for my garlic press. I don't just use it for garlic, though. I also press chile peppers, citrus peel, and herbs like fresh rosemary at the same time that I press the garlic.

—Tom Spofford, Davis, CA



To make buttercream icing pure white, add just a touch of blue food coloring.

A drop of blue food dye turns frosting snow white

While making wedding cakes for both my son and daughter, I learned that butter and vanilla extract produce a buttercream frosting that is off-white in color. To achieve a snow-white frosting, a friend suggested adding one drop of blue food coloring to each batch. It worked.

—Betsy Rice,
Port Washington, NY

Pastry scraper cleans counter

Keep your pastry scraper handy after you've finished rolling out your pie crust or kneading your bread and use it to clean off your counter; it's especially efficient at scraping off bits of hardened dough.

—Lily McCafferty,
Newton, MA

Better apple coring

Are apples getting larger, or is my corer just too small? Whenever I try to core apples with my traditional corer, I end up having to remove part

of the core with a paring knife. I discovered that if I cut the apple in half longitudinally first, and then use the corer, I can get the whole core out. By halving the apple, I can see exactly where the core is and aim properly. Further, I can use the whole corer on each half, which removes a greater amount of core.

—Nancy Summers,
Potomac, MD

frozen meat slices better

To slice flank steak thinly for stir-fries, it's easier if you freeze it so it's firmer, about 15 minutes or more. This also works for slab bacon, or any meat or poultry that you need to slice before cooking.

—Gail Shem-Lee,
Martinez, CA

A simple onion gravy for brisket

For a wonderful, almost fat-free gravy to accompany brisket, I roast about five sliced onions along with a well-seasoned 3-pound piece of meat. When the brisket is done, I transfer the meat and

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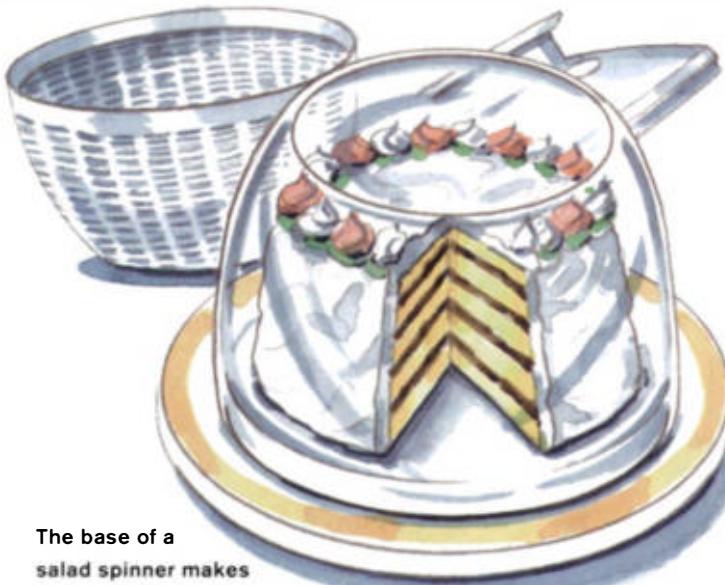
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The base of a salad spinner makes an impromptu cake cover.

onions to a platter, deglaze the pan, and refrigerate everything. The next day, I purée the onions with an immersion blender and add them to the deglazed drippings, which I have defatted and reheated. This gives me a robust, slightly thickened gravy that's a flavorful addition to the brisket, which I slice very thinly and warm up gently in the gravy.

—Jeanne Schimmel,
Hobe Sound, FL

A drop of oil protects stainless-steel stoves

My professional-style stainless-steel stove looks and works great, but the brushed metal finish shows every fingerprint and smudge. To keep it looking great, after cleaning the trim with soapy water, I wipe it with the same cloth I use for polishing my furniture with lemon oil. You can't see or feel the oil on the metal, but it protects the finish from blemishes. A drop of mineral oil or baby oil also works well. Wipe the oven with a dry cloth afterward, if you want.

—Margaret Hirsch,
Rancho Palos Verdes, CA

Invert a salad spinner to cover a cake

I often make old-fashioned layer cakes. Finding myself without a proper cake cover, I've discovered that the outside bowl of my salad spinner, turned upside down, fits perfectly over a 9-inch cake.

—Brooke P. Cole,
Stone Ridge, NY

Getting more flavor from chicken stock

This is a third-generation tip handed down. Rather than use a cheesecloth to strain chicken stock, I use a well-worn, thin, almost transparent cotton tea towel. This captures all the fat and particles from the bones (it works best if

the broth is lukewarm, not hot, so the fat has started to congeal). I end up with a very clear, fat-free broth. I then separate the vegetables from the bones and squeeze them through the rinsed tea towel, adding these juices to the stock. This gives even more flavor to the broth.

—Sylvia Sandner,
Bradford, Ontario

Plastic wrap keeps processor lid clean

To keep the top half of your food processor clean while you're processing, put a piece of plastic wrap over the bowl before putting on the lid. This works like a charm on many processing jobs, with the exception of those that require use of the feed tube.

—Christina Stuccio,
Weehawken, NJ

Protect nonstick pans during transport

As a personal chef, I need to carry my nonstick cookware to my clients' kitchens, and I worry about damaging the surface during transit. My simple solution is to place a layer or two of paper towel between the pans so they don't get scratched. I also do this in my own kitchen when these pans are stacked during storage.

—Terry Palsha,
via e-mail



Layers of paper towel protect the surface of nonstick pans.

Sort waste products easily

For easy cleanup, I hook the handles of a plastic grocery bag over the drawer beneath the counter where I'm chopping vegetables. As I clean and chop vegetables, I scrape discards into the bag. When I'm done, I remove the bag and dump the debris in my compost pile. I hook a second bag over another drawer for noncompostable waste. And on a third, I hook a bag for recyclables.

—Lynda Breeze,
Simi Valley, CA

Use artichoke and asparagus cooking broth for risotto

After steaming or boiling artichokes or asparagus, I use the cooking water as a broth for risotto. If I'm cooking one of these strong-flavored vegetables but not making the risotto the same day, I just freeze the cooking water for another time.

—Marian Schmidt,
via e-mail

Easier cleanup after making bread

Here is how I make cleanup easier after making bread dough in a stand mixer. After removing the dough from the bowl, I use a pastry brush to brush the flour dust from the mixer arm and base into a small dish or bowl. I use this small pile of flour to finish the dough by hand before the first rising.

I'm also careful to soak the mixing bowl and the dough hook in cold water. Warm or hot water would cause the flour to stick; cold water helps it slide right off.

—Natalie Slater Cornwell,
Quincy, IL ♦

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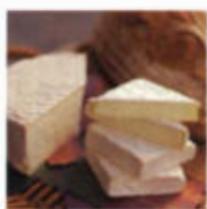


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FOR THE WAY IT'S MADE.™

Crank Up the Heat for

High heat and generous seasonings produce crisp, moist chicken with loads of flavor

BY ABIGAIL JOHNSON DODGE

My mom was the master of the chicken dinner. And that's a very good thing, considering we ate chicken at least six nights a week (or so it seemed). Rolled, baked, stuffed, broiled, sautéed, stewed—you name it, she made it. But it was the baked versions that were always my favorite. She coated the pieces (always on the bone for extra flavor) with melted butter, seasoned them well, and baked them until they were golden brown. The chicken was always moist and tasty, and the pan juices mingling with the butter were heavenly drizzled over rice or potatoes.

Baked chicken is still one of my favorite comfort foods, and today I prepare it for my family much like Mom did, though a bit less frequently. I follow her guidelines, along with a few of my own, and the chicken is always golden brown on the outside, and juicy inside.

Follow this blueprint for perfect baked chicken

I take the same three-step approach any time I bake chicken: I select the best chicken, toss it with a little butter and a generous amount of seasonings (to avoid the dreaded bland baked chicken), and bake it in a very hot oven to fully develop the flavors and crisp the skin.

Buy the best bird you can find. After all, the chicken is the star, and no seasoning can disguise an inferior chicken. I like to buy a free-range bird, which is fresh and ever so much tastier than its mass-produced relatives. I always look for a chicken that weighs between 3½ and 4 pounds. This size bird



One-step seasoning. Dredge chicken quarters (wing tips tucked under) in melted butter and fresh herbs.

(a large fryer) yields pieces big enough to withstand a longer run at higher heat in the oven. This means the chicken can stay in the oven long enough for the skin to get crispy, yet the meat will stay moist.

I buy a whole bird and ask the butcher at the grocery store to remove the backbone and cut the chicken into quarters. This way I have more control over the quality of the chicken and the size of the pieces. My family likes the variety of dark and white meat. Of course, if the group I'm cooking for prefers a certain part of the bird over another, I substitute those parts for quarters. But I try to stick with equal-size, larger pieces for even cooking and the best results.

Choose your baking pan carefully. Whoever said that size wasn't important didn't know a thing about baking chicken. For that well-done skin and

the Best Baked Chicken



An hour at 425°F works wonders, crisping the skin, caramelizing the juices, and getting flavors to develop.



Roasted shallots and garlic are both seasoning and accompaniment in Baked Chicken with Herbs, Garlic & Shallots.

moist, juicy meat that everyone loves, always start with a shallow pan. If you use anything deeper than 2½ inches, you'll end up with stewed chicken and flabby skin. So don't even think of using a deep roasting pan. Stay away from too-small gratin-style pans, too. Overcrowding the pan will end up steaming the chicken and all those flavorful extra aromatic ingredients you add.

This doesn't mean you need a fancy or expensive pan, just a pan that's the right size for the job. I have great success with a couple of sizes of Pyrex baking dish. When I'm cooking chicken with lots of extras, like the Honey-Balsamic Baked Chicken on p. 39, I choose a larger pan (like a 10½x15½-inch Pyrex). This way the flavors mingle but still have enough elbow room to brown during baking. Medium-size pans (a 9x13-inch rectangle or oval)

are fine for recipes that don't have a lot of extras in the pan, like the Crunchy Parmesan Chicken on p. 38. The chicken should fit comfortably in the pan with just enough room to squeeze in a spoon for basting. Keep in mind that you'll want to use a pan that can also go on the stovetop (enameled cast iron or stainless steel) if you plan to make a sauce from pan drippings, as in the Lemon Tarragon Chicken on p. 40.

Go for big flavors and lots of them. I am never timid when it comes to seasoning my baked chicken. Plain chicken is awfully bland, but that makes it the perfect foil for your favorite bold flavors. I begin a recipe for baked chicken by thinking about what flavors and seasonings complement and enhance the mildly earthy side of chicken, and then I consider how those flavors will taste after cooking

for an hour at 425°F. For example, fresh herbs play an important role in Baked Chicken with Herbs, Garlic & Shallots. Ten sprigs of thyme and eight of rosemary may sound like a lot for four chicken pieces. But as the chicken bakes, the kitchen fills with the heady aroma of the herbs while their flavors mellow and permeate the chicken. In this case, I choose hardy, woody herbs that withstand the high heat of cooking; more delicate herbs like parsley and chives would lose all their flavor when exposed to high heat.

When I'm cooking vegetables alongside the chicken, I choose garlic, peppers, onions, tomatoes, or other vegetables that deepen in flavor and character as they cook. I cut the veggies into decent-

size pieces (about 1 inch) so that they'll soften but not disappear. The vegetables, as well as the juices they give off as they cook, add another element of flavor when served with the chicken.

There are two other tricks for maximizing flavor in baked chicken. The first is to tuck a bit of compound butter (quick to make) under the skin. The butter adds flavor and helps keep the chicken meat moist. Second, don't forget pan drippings.

Usually I simply spoon pan drippings over the finished baked chicken for added flavor and moistness. But you can go one step further: remove the fat and deglaze the pan drippings with a liquid for a quick sauce (see the photo on p. 40).

For the best skin, heat the oven to 425°F. I think most folks truly underestimate the importance of baking chicken in a hot oven. If the oven isn't hot enough—only in the 350° to 400°F range—the chicken will overcook before it can brown. At 425°F, the chicken is well browned yet still juicy after about an hour. Over the years, I've tried lots of variations on Mom's Baked Chicken, and, well, sometimes it just pays to do what your mother tells you. So cook the chicken at 425°F.

I usually don't baste chicken while it's baking; I find the skin winds up crispier in the end without basting. One exception is a recipe like the Crunchy Parmesan Chicken, where basting actually helps to form that wonderfully crisp crust. Without basting, the flour-cheese coating would stay dry.

I do find that rotating the pan during cooking is often helpful. Every oven has hot spots. It's a good idea, no matter what you're baking, to know where these are. Actually, if you don't know where they are, you'll learn when you bake chicken. Certain spots will brown more quickly than others. So give the pan a turn or two during baking to ensure even browning and baking.

"I'm never timid when it comes to seasoning my baked chicken," says Abby Dodge.

Crunchy Parmesan Chicken

I like to say that this chicken is my improvement on Shake 'n Bake; it has a spicy, crunchy crust that keeps it very moist on the inside. If you don't have herbes de Provence on hand, substitute dried thyme or sage or another favorite dried herb. Remember to baste occasionally to help set the crust. **Serves four.**

1 chicken (3½ to 4 lb.), cut into quarters

4 Tbs. unsalted butter

½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

½ cup all-purpose flour

1½ tsp. coarse salt

1½ tsp. dried herbes de Provence

1¼ tsp. sweet paprika

⅛ to ¼ tsp. cayenne

Freshly ground black pepper

Heat the oven to 425°F. Rinse the chicken and pat it dry with paper towels. Cut away any excess fat and tuck the wings behind each breast.

Put the butter in a shallow baking pan (a 9x13-inch Pyrex pan or large oval baking dish works well). Put the pan into the oven while it's heating. When the butter is melted (about 10 min.), remove the pan and set it on a heatproof surface or on a couple of potholders.

In a shallow, medium bowl, combine the Parmesan, flour, salt, herbes de Provence, paprika, cayenne, and



For a crispy Parmesan crust, be sure to baste with the pan drippings.

lots of freshly ground pepper. Dredge a piece of chicken, skin side down, in the melted butter first and then in the cheese mixture. Use your hands, pressing gently, to coat evenly. Turn the chicken skin side up and push it to the side of the pan. Repeat with the remaining chicken pieces.

Bake, basting with the pan juices occasionally (tilt the pan and spoon the juices from the corners), until the chicken is well browned and cooked through, 50 to 60 min.



Before baking, mix vegetables and seasonings in the pan. Dredge the chicken well, flip, and drizzle with honey.



All those vegetables make a hearty sauce for Honey-Balsamic Chicken.

Honey-Balsamic Baked Chicken with Tomatoes, Mushrooms & Peppers

While the chicken cooks to a deep brown color, the vegetables in the pan simmer into a delicious chunky sauce to serve with the chicken. Serves four.

1 chicken (3½ to 4 lb.), cut into quarters
1 medium red bell pepper, cored, seeded, and cut into 1-inch pieces
1 medium yellow bell pepper, cored, seeded, and cut into 1-inch pieces
½ lb. mushrooms (button, cremini, or other), cleaned and cut into quarters
14½-oz. can diced tomatoes, drained
3 Tbs. olive oil
2 Tbs. balsamic vinegar
1 Tbs. chopped fresh rosemary
1½ tsp. coarse salt
Freshly ground black pepper
1½ Tbs. honey

Heat the oven to 425°F. Rinse the chicken and pat it dry with paper towels. Cut away any excess fat and tuck the wings behind each breast.

In a large, shallow baking pan (the 10½x15½-inch Pyrex is ideal), toss the peppers, mushrooms, and tomatoes. Drizzle the oil and balsamic vinegar over the vegetables and sprinkle with the rosemary, ½ tsp. salt, and lots of freshly ground pepper. Toss until well coated. Dredge the chicken pieces, skin

side down, in the vegetable mixture so that they get coated in the oil and vinegar and turn them over. Sprinkle with the remaining 1 tsp. salt and more pepper. Drizzle the skin with the honey. Bake until the chicken is well browned and cooked through, 50 to 60 min.

Baked Chicken with Herbs, Garlic & Shallots

This recipe is very similar to one my mother often cooked when I was growing up; now it's a staple of my weeknight dinner repertoire. Vary the herbs as you like, but stick to the hardy ones—thyme, rosemary, sage, and oregano. They'll roast without burning and have a stronger flavor. Serves four.

1 chicken (3½ to 4 lb.), cut into quarters
3 Tbs. unsalted butter
6 medium shallots, cut in half and peeled
8 large garlic cloves, peeled
Leaves stripped from 10 sprigs fresh thyme
Leaves stripped from 8 sprigs fresh rosemary
1½ tsp. coarse salt
Freshly ground black pepper

Heat the oven to 425°F. Rinse the chicken and pat it dry with paper towels. Cut away any excess fat and tuck the wings behind each breast.

Put the butter into a large, shallow baking pan (the 10½x15½-inch Pyrex pan is ideal for this). Put the pan into the oven while it's heating. When the butter

is melted (about 10 min.), remove the pan and set it on a heatproof surface or on a couple of potholders. Add the shallots, garlic, thyme, and rosemary, and swirl the pan to coat the ingredients in the butter.

Dredge the chicken, skin side down, in the butter and herb mixture, and arrange, skin side up, in the pan. Sprinkle the chicken generously with the salt and pepper. Bake until the chicken is browned and cooked through, 50 to 60 min. Serve with the shallots and garlic along with a drizzle of the pan drippings.



Tuck flavored butter under the skin for tasty meat and good pan juices.



Make a quick sauce for Lemon Tarragon Chicken by reducing a bit of chicken stock with the pan drippings.

In a small bowl, mash the soft butter, lemon zest, 1 Tbs. of the lemon juice, the mustard, and the tarragon until well blended and smooth. Stir in 1 tsp. of the salt and pepper to taste.

Loosen the skin from each chicken piece to create a pocket. Be careful not to tear the skin or peel it away completely. Spread an equal amount of the flavored butter under the skin of each piece. Use your fingers to massage the butter around so that it spreads out as evenly as possible under the skin. Pull the skin back in place over the butter.



Get a double dose of flavor from the herb butter and the pan sauce.

Lemon Tarragon Chicken with Pan Sauce

This baked chicken starts with a flavorful herb butter stuffed under the skin, and finishes with a quick sauce made by deglazing the pan drippings with chicken stock. When making the herb butter, make sure the butter is very soft or it won't combine well with the other ingredients. If tarragon isn't available, substitute another fresh herb, such as parsley or savory. *Serves four.*

1 chicken (3½ to 4 lb.), cut into quarters
3 Tbs. unsalted butter, very soft
½ tsp. grated lemon zest
Juice from 1 large lemon
2 tsp. Dijon-style mustard
2 tsp. chopped fresh tarragon leaves
1½ tsp. coarse salt
Freshly ground black pepper
½ cup canned low-salt chicken stock

Heat the oven to 425°F. Rinse the chicken and pat it dry with paper towels. Cut away any excess fat and tuck the wings behind each breast.

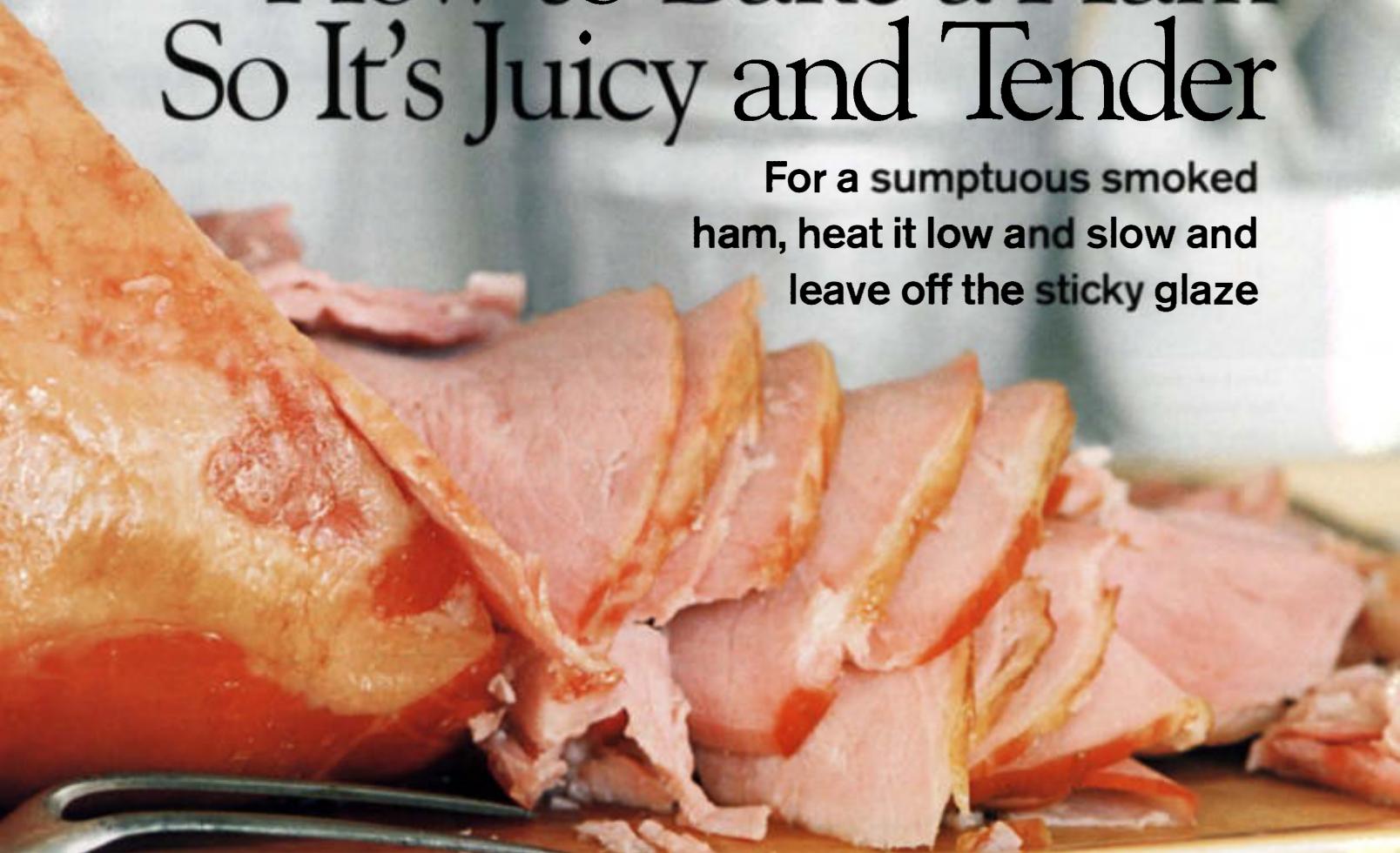
Arrange the chicken in a shallow baking pan that can safely go on the stovetop. (An enamel-coated cast-iron pan such as a Le Creuset or a stainless-steel pan would work well.) Sprinkle with the remaining ½ tsp. salt and more pepper. Bake, basting at first with the remaining lemon juice and then the pan juices, until the chicken is browned and cooked through, 55 to 60 min.

Remove the chicken from the pan and loosely cover it with foil. Pour off the pan juices into a small measuring cup and let them settle until they separate. Spoon off the fat and discard it. Meanwhile, set the baking pan over medium-high heat and add the chicken stock and ½ cup water. Bring to a boil, scraping the bottom and sides of the pan to loosen the browned bits. Continue boiling until the sauce is reduced by half. Add the reserved pan juices, taste, and adjust the seasoning. Spoon a little sauce over each piece of chicken before serving.

Abby Dodge is Fine Cooking's test kitchen director. Her second cookbook, Williams-Sonoma: The Kids' Cookbook, will be published by Time Life this fall. ♦

How to Bake a Ham So It's Juicy and Tender

For a sumptuous smoked ham, heat it low and slow and leave off the sticky glaze



A partially boned ham is easy to slice. For a bone-in ham, cut a wedge in the shank end. Starting at the wedge, slice to the butt end, slicing the meat to the bone.



BY JOHN MARTIN TAYLOR

My friend Paula begged this baked ham recipe from a lady who runs a diner in Athens, Georgia. The lady agreed to give it to her but only after making Paula swear she'd keep it to herself. But Paula couldn't resist telling me, in part because it's so ridiculously easy: Put a whole, fully cooked, smoked ham in a roasting pan. Put a lid of foil on it, but not tight, sort of caddywhumpus, so it doesn't get too crusty on the outside but does take on a little texture. Put the ham in a 275°F oven. Do nothing else to it for as long as eight hours. Take it out of the oven and let it rest while you bake the biscuits (you *have* to have biscuits). Carve and serve.

This ham is so good that during parties I have to make sure no one's around when I carve it because folks will flat-out pull the thing to death.

The only hard part about this recipe (and it's only hard if you don't live in the South) is finding a whole,

You have to have biscuits



Don't overmix the dough or your biscuits will be tough. Blend just until the mixture leaves the sides of the bowl.



Flour your fingertips before patting out the dough. Finish with a rolling pin, using a light touch.



Punch—don't twist—your biscuits. Use a metal cutter, not an overturned glass.

fully cooked, smoked ham, preferably not spiral-sliced and not glazed. I find most glazes sickeningly sweet and beside the point if you want to actually taste the ham.

But which ham to buy?

A ham is defined most broadly as the hind leg of a pig. Most hams are cured, smoked, or both, for preservation and flavor. (A fresh ham is *not* cured; it's simply fresh pork.)

A whole ham is perfect for the holidays; it feeds a crowd easily. Most supermarkets north of the Mason-Dixon Line don't stock whole hams year-round. (What you will find are half hams—whole hams cut into shank and butt portions.) But during the holidays you can usually find whole hams no matter where you live. And with Easter coming late this year, there's still time for you to hound your butcher into stocking some whole hams, which weigh up to 20 pounds and can easily feed 25 people. Your best bet, however—both for availability and for flavor—may be to mail-order your ham. (See Sources, p. 84.)

But the beauty of this recipe is that you don't need to buy the best ham. The best ham, after all, is a real country ham, which means the ham has been dry-cured in salt, smoked, and aged for at least six months. But country ham is scarce in spring, and many people find it too salty to act as the main course of a meal anyway. What you're looking for instead is a "city" ham. It usually comes sealed in plastic (not in a can), has been cured (but not dry-cured) and smoked (but not necessarily aged), and is fully cooked (it says so on the label).

Because these hams are "wet-cured" (soaked in a brine or, if mass-produced, injected with one), they contain added water (meat is already made up of about 75% water). The National Pork Producers Council grades these hams on a water-to-protein ratio; generally, the more protein, the better the ham. A ham cured without added water, such as a country ham, must have at least 20.5% protein, and will simply be labeled "ham." A ham labeled "ham with natural juices" must have at least 18.5% protein, and one labeled "water added" 17%. The ham to avoid is the kind labeled "ham and water product." These hams have less than 17% protein and can in fact be much less than that. But go ahead and choose a "water added" ham; I find that added moisture is actually beneficial to the long, gentle reheating I'm suggesting. I haven't tried this method on a "ham with natural juices." But as with all of these hams, which have instructions that generally recommend that you heat them at 350°F for 15 minutes per pound, I think this gentler method would work better.

A bone-in ham has the best flavor, texture, and shape. I think meat tastes best when cooked on the bone. (And a ham bone is serious kitchen currency; save it—you can freeze it—to make the best bean soup.) A partially boned ham is next best; it looks like a big football, but it's easy to carve, and if you're carving in the kitchen, no one will see its funny shape anyway. Fully boned hams can have an off texture because the meat, once it's been pulled off the bone, must be reshaped to fill the hole left from the bone.

Be sure to make biscuits

Slices of sweet, salty, smoky ham piled on a platter are a wonderful addition to a buffet. I love it with collards cooked in ample olive oil and baked sweet potatoes. And biscuits.

Most southerners grew up, as I did, eating lard biscuits—light and flaky but seldom bigger than a silver dollar (see *Fine Cooking* #14). But there exists a biscuit that we used to see only on special occasions, such as a birthday breakfast or a holiday morning. What sets these biscuits apart is that they're bigger and they're made with butter in place of the lard—which seemed extravagant when I was a child but now seems oddly conservative.

You'll get the best results with soft southern flour. Literally soft to the touch, southern flour is made from the soft winter wheat that grows down South. It has less protein than northern flour, which means it forms less gluten and is therefore more tender. If you can't find it in your neck of the woods, see Sources, p. 84. A decent substitute is to use half (by weight) all-purpose flour and half cake flour.

RECIPES

Slow-Baked "City" Ham

If you opt for a half-ham, buy the shank end—the meat contains less fat and gristle; for all size hams, figure about 25 minutes per pound. Serves 25 as part of a buffet, with leftovers.

1 fully cooked, bone-in, smoked ham, 17 to 19 lb.

Heat the oven to 275°F. Put the ham in a roasting pan or a big cast-iron skillet. Cover it loosely with foil and heat it for 7½ to 8 hours. Let the ham rest for at least 20 min. Before carving, remove the fat and rind from the surface of the ham, if you like. Serve with biscuits and mustard or your favorite chutney.

"Cat-Head" Biscuits

I love these buttery biscuits (named for their relatively large size). Yields 12 biscuits; recipe doubles easily.

15½ oz. (3½ cups) soft southern wheat flour, such as White Lily, or half (by weight) cake flour and half all-purpose flour; more as needed

1 Tbs. baking powder

1 tsp. salt

5 oz. (10 Tbs.) unsalted butter, cubed and chilled

1¼ to 1½ cups buttermilk, at room temperature

Heat the oven to 450°F. If you're measuring the flour by volume, do so by spooning it into a measuring cup and leveling it off. Put the flour into a large metal mixing bowl, add the baking powder and salt, and mix well with a whisk. Cut in the butter with two knives or a pastry blender until it's uniformly mixed in and there



A southern ham sandwich. Spread a split biscuit with a delicate mustard and stuff it with sliced ham.

are no large lumps. Add 1¼ cups of the buttermilk, stirring with a rubber spatula until the mixture is just blended and leaves the sides of the bowl. Don't overmix. Add more buttermilk or flour only if necessary.

Dump the contents out onto a lightly floured surface. Place the fingers of both hands down inside the flour bag to coat them. Using only your fingers, lightly pat the dough together. With a floured rolling pin, lightly even out the dough to ¾ inch thick. Using a floured metal 2½-inch biscuit cutter—not an overturned glass, which will seal the edges so they can't rise—quickly punch out the biscuits. Don't twist the cutter in the dough (which also seals the edges). Avoid touching the dough with your hands. Gather any scraps, roll, and cut out more biscuits. These won't rise as high, but they'll still be quite good.

Set the biscuits, close but not touching, on an ungreased baking sheet and bake until they're lightly browned on top, 15 to 18 min. Serve at once with the ham.

John Martin Taylor is the author of Hoppin' John's Lowcountry Cooking and The New Southern Cook (Bantam Books). ♦

wine choices



Ham needs medium-weight red wines with berry-fruit and spice notes

In its traditional guise (festooned with pineapple rings and slathered with glazes), ham has been a real stumper when it comes to pairing with wine (the problem isn't the ham itself, it's all that sugar). But lighten up on those toppings and you're home free, with plenty of options.

Ever tried a Marsanne? It's a full-flavored, dry white wine,

originally from the Rhône. McDowell of Mendocino makes a beauty that tastes like a citrusy Chardonnay with some floral-fruity Gewürztraminer splashed in. It does wonders with ham and tastes like pure springtime.

But given a choice, I'd opt for red to bring out the deep flavors of the smoked meat. You're safest if you go light

on tannins and heavy on flavors that mate well with ham (spices and berries, for example, rather than bell pepper, green olive, tobacco, or earth). Stick with Rhône varietals and blends, like Château du Trignon and Domaine de Beaurenard, which have the typical black pepper and red fruit nuances of Côtes du Rhône blends.

From Down Under, Shiraz from Black Opal and Taltarni offer lots of berries and spice. Or, for a lighter effect, try a Cinsault from Frick or Acorn in Sonoma. All are medium-weight, and medium-priced, at well under \$20.

Rosina Tinari Wilson teaches and writes about wine in the San Francisco Bay area.

Sweet Peas

The Essence of Spring

Done as soon as they're warmed through, peas are best enjoyed simply, and soon

BY DEBORAH MADISON

English peas, also called sweet peas, are creatures of cool weather—not cool enough to be cold, but not warm enough to be hot, either. In other words, spring—which means their appearance is brief in most places.

A bowl of freshly shucked peas, simmered briefly and then tossed with butter, is luxurious, and this is one of the very best ways to experience their unique sweetness and the engaging way they pop in your mouth. But if you're up for exploration, you'll find that fresh peas are wonderfully versatile: they're equally well-suited to puréeing to make a soup, adding to risotto or to pasta, or, if you don't have very many, using as a garnish for vegetable ragoûts or sautés, salads, pastas, or stir-fries.

Hurry peas home and cook them soon

There's just about no way you can go wrong cooking fresh pod peas.

Unless you grow sweet peas yourself, the farmers' market is the best source for good ones. Exposure to heat during long-distance travel can dry up their juices and turn their sugars to starch. Time does the same thing, which is why peas often don't look their best in the grocery store; they're days away from the field and tired from travel.

At the market, look for bright-green, moist-looking, medium-size pods. Pea pods should swell gently (rather than bulge) with their cargo. Too large

and they're likely to be starchy; too small and chances are the peas nestled inside won't be much bigger than a small bead. If the pods look dried or yellowed or are beginning to shrivel in places, you can be pretty sure that the peas within will have lost their magic and are on their way to becoming starchy. Ask for a taste at the market—open up a pod and find out. A pea that's perfect will be sweet, moist, and crunchy.

Peas are sweetest and most tender cooked soon and briefly. They taste best when cooked as soon as possible after picking or purchasing, and they're done when their green color brightens, which usually takes about a minute in boiling water.

Peas seem to have been naturally designed for easy shucking, so they go fast. You can usually shuck a pound of peas, which yields about one cup of peas, in about ten minutes. So sit down and shuck away, opening up the pods with your thumbnail.

Fresh peas are divine in any dish. They're worlds better than frozen: the variation in size is a refreshing departure from packaged, graded peas, and the special flavor is unmatched.

Peas' delicate spring flavor is unusually versatile. I can't think of an herb that isn't a natural with peas, even tender spring sage leaves with their minty overtones are pea-compatible. Anything that's in season with peas is bound to partner them well—especially spring onions, butter lettuce, leeks, sorrel, and new turnips.



Pasta with Peas & Basil

This combination is a favorite of mine. I'd suggest a pasta that can catch the peas, such as small shells, tubetti, or farfalle. I love tender egg pasta with peas, especially a gently twisted egg noodle where there's just enough curve to nestle the peas and keep them from falling to the bottom of the plate. For a beautiful orange hue and an exotic fragrance, add a couple of pinches of saffron at the same time you add the shallots. Serves two as a main course; four as a first course.

8 oz. curly egg noodles or dried shaped pasta
2 Tbs. unsalted butter
3 shallots, chopped
1/4 cup dry white wine
1/2 cup Vegetable Stock (p. 46), chicken stock, or water; more as needed
1 1/2 lb. peas, shucked (to yield 1 to 1 1/2 cups)
1/2 tsp. sea salt, or to taste
3/4 cup *crème fraîche*
1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan or Dry Jack cheese
1/2 cup thinly sliced basil leaves
Freshly ground black pepper

Cook the pasta in a large pot of boiling salted water. Meanwhile, in a wide skillet over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the shallots; cook, stirring, until soft, about 3 min. Add the wine and cook until reduced by two-thirds and slightly syrupy. When the pasta is just about done boiling, add the stock and the peas to the skillet. Sprinkle with the sea salt, and cook until the peas are just tender. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the *crème fraîche* (it needn't melt completely). As soon as the pasta is done, drain it and add it to the pea mixture; it's fine to let some of the pasta water drip into the skillet. Toss with tongs to coat the pasta thoroughly, adding more stock if needed. Sprinkle with the grated cheese and basil, add a grinding of black pepper, and serve in heated pasta bowls.

(More recipes follow)



"There's something enticing about shucking peas," says Deborah Madison. "Others always want to join in."

To add richness and tang to Pasta with Peas & Basil, stir in *crème fraîche*—it's lighter and subtler than sour cream.



Combine gently. Toss in the pasta and then add the basil just before serving.

Pea & Spinach Soup with Coconut Milk

Peas are just as good with curry spices, cilantro, and coconut milk as they are with fresh herbs. I especially like to make this soup, which includes spinach, when it's hard to gather enough peas for a pure pea soup. The pea flavor still comes through nicely. *Yields 5½ cups soup; serves six.*

2 large leeks (white parts plus the pale green), quartered and sliced to yield 2 cups (or 2 cups chopped scallions or 2 cups thinly sliced white onion)
1 Tbs. unsalted butter
2 Tbs. white basmati rice
1 tsp. salt; more to taste
2 tsp. curry powder
4 sprigs fresh cilantro; more for garnish
4 cups Vegetable Stock (recipe at right) or chicken stock
1½ to 2 lb. peas, shucked (to yield 1½ to 2 cups)
4 cups lightly packed coarsely chopped spinach leaves, any thick stems removed
7 oz. coconut milk (½ a can, or about 1 cup)
Freshly ground white pepper to taste

Soak the leeks in a bowl of cold water to remove any grit. Meanwhile, in a soup pot over medium heat, melt the butter and stir in the rice. Scoop the leeks from the water, shaking off excess, and add them to the pot along with the salt, curry powder, cilantro, and 1 cup of the stock. Cook over medium-low heat at a vigorous simmer for about 12 min, so the rice is almost done. Add the remaining 3 cups stock, the peas, and the spinach and bring to a boil. Boil for about 3 min. Turn off the heat and stir in the coconut milk. In a blender or a food processor, purée the soup in batches until smooth. Taste for salt, season with white pepper, and serve, garnished with fresh cilantro leaves. (If you prefer a soup with more texture, purée 1 cup and return it to the pot, season, garnish and serve.)



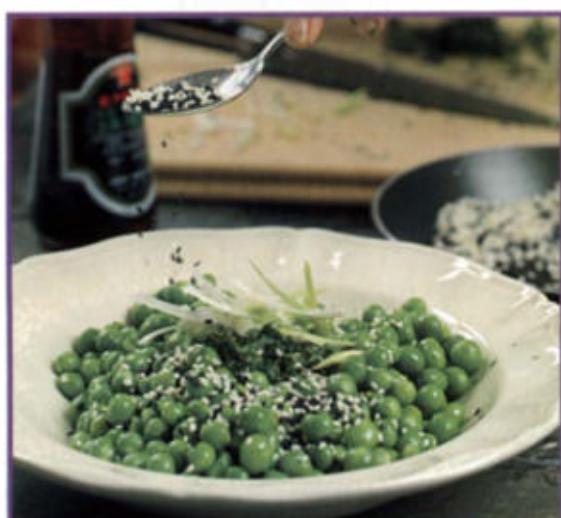
Vegetable Stock for Pea Recipes

Be sure to rinse the leek roots and greens and the pea pods thoroughly before you make this stock. *Yields about 5½ cups.*

Leek roots and 2 cups coarsely chopped leek greens (use the few inches of green nearest the root end, just beyond the whites), well rinsed
2 cups parsley stems
2 cups whole empty pea pods
1 bay leaf
1 or 2 sprigs of thyme
1 carrot, chopped
1½ tsp. salt
7 cups cold water

Put all the ingredients in a stockpot. Bring to a boil, lower the heat, and simmer for 35 min. Strain.

This Pea & Spinach Soup gets its richness from coconut milk, and a hint of spice from curry powder.



More ways with sweet peas

When pea season arrives, indulge. Few vegetables can compete with a bowl of simply cooked fresh shucked peas tossed with sweet butter, sea salt, and freshly ground pepper, but here are a few more of my favorite contenders. Try tossing briefly cooked peas with:

♦ toasted sesame seeds, slivered scallions, cilantro, and a drizzle of dark sesame oil (shown at left).

♦ fresh butter with chopped chervil and chives, or chopped mint, tarragon, or lovage.

♦ a spoonful of fragrant olive oil with torn basil leaves or fresh sage, plus the blossoms.

♦ a few drops roasted peanut oil with freshly minced ginger and spring garlic.

Pea & Parsley Risotto

Using the Vegetable Stock at left will intensify the flavor of the vegetables, so be sure to save the parsley stems, leek scraps, and pea pods from this recipe. Serves two as a *main course*; four as a *generous first course*.

FOR THE PEA-PARSLEY SAUCE:

1 cup water
Salt
1 bunch fresh flat-leaf parsley, leaves plucked (to yield 2 cups), large stems reserved for the Vegetable Stock
A few sprigs of a favorite leafy herb, such as tarragon, lovage leaves, or fennel greens
1½ to 2 lb. peas, shucked (to yield 1½ to 2 cups), ¾ cup set aside for the risotto, pods reserved for Vegetable Stock
Freshly ground white pepper to taste

FOR THE RICE:

4½ cups Vegetable Stock (recipe at left) or chicken stock
2 Tbs. unsalted butter
¾ cup finely diced leeks (white part only), rinsed well, greens and leek bottoms reserved for the Vegetable Stock
1½ cups arborio rice
½ cup dry white wine
Salt to taste
½ cup *crème fraîche* or whipping cream
⅓ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
1 handful fresh chervil, coarsely chopped, or 1 Tbs. finely chopped fresh tarragon
Freshly ground white pepper to taste

To make the sauce—In a small saucepan, bring the water to a boil. Add a pinch of salt, the parsley leaves, and whatever herb you're using. Boil for 1 min.

Forcing puréed peas and parsley through a sieve creates a silky sauce...



...stirring the sauce in at the end gives intensity...



Turn off the heat, add the peas (except for the reserved ¾ cup), and let stand for 5 min. Purée in a blender at high speed for 1 min. and then force through a sieve. Taste for salt; season with white pepper. You'll end up with about 1 cup purée. Set aside the strained sauce.

To make the rice—Have the stock simmering on the stove and the pea-parsley sauce nearby. In a wide pot over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the leek whites, cooking until they start to soften, 3 to 4 min. Add the rice and cook, stirring frequently, until the grains are completely coated with butter, about 1 min. Add the wine and simmer until absorbed. Add 2 cups of the stock and cook at a lively simmer, stirring occasionally until it has been absorbed, about 3 min. Add ½ tsp. salt and then add another cup of stock, stirring occasionally. When all the liquid has been absorbed, add ½ cup more stock, now stirring more frequently. Once the stock is absorbed, test the rice for doneness: it should be tender, but with a bit of bite. If the rice needs more cooking, add another ½ cup stock. When the rice tastes nearly done, stir in the pea-parsley sauce and the reserved ¾ cup peas. Raise the heat and cook briskly, stirring all the while until the rice is done (tender but still with a bit of bite) and most of the sauce has been absorbed. Remove the pan from the heat; stir in the *crème fraîche* and the Parmesan cheese. Add the chervil or tarragon, season with a few grinds of pepper, and serve.



...so Pea & Parsley Risotto has vivid color and full-on flavor.

Deborah Madison wrote the award-winning Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone (Broadway Books). ♦

Down-Home Spoonbread

This classic southern side dish is both comforting and sophisticated

BY KAY FAHEY



For fluffy spoonbread, use a hand blender or a whisk to whip egg whites to medium-stiff peaks.



As if you were making polenta, slowly cook cornmeal in milk until the mixture pulls away from the sides of the pan.

Puffy and light, yet creamy and comforting, southern spoonbread is part pudding, part soufflé. Made much like a soufflé, with whipped egg whites folded into a base of cooked cornmeal and milk, spoonbread is baked in a straight-sided dish and puffs up gently in the oven. Yet with one spoonful of this creamy pudding, the nutty-sweet flavor of corn reminds you that this is a down-home southern dish.

Southern spoonbread is really a happy marriage of European and Native American cuisines. In colonial America, cooks adapted American stone-ground cornmeal to traditional European dishes such as puddings and soufflés to produce new dishes like spoonbread. In 1847, Sarah Rutledge's *The Carolina Housewife* gave a recipe for spoonbread (she called it Owendaw Corn Bread), saying, "it has almost the delicacy of a baked custard." Yet spoonbread was certainly around before then. The colonial Williamsburg cookbook, *From Williamsburg Kitchens*, has recipes reflecting food from the late



Fold gently when combining the whipped egg whites and the cornmeal so the whites don't deflate.



Like a soufflé, spoonbread puffs up in the oven, but begins to deflate shortly after you take it out.

1700s, and it includes three recipes for spoonbread, each just slightly different from the next.

This love of spoonbread hasn't waned over the years; southerners seem to eat it in endless variations. In fact, today's southern restaurant chefs are still inventing their own versions. The simple corn flavor might be enhanced with the addition of chopped asparagus, sweet pepper, a blend of sautéed jalapeños and onions, or even a bit of cheese. Sometimes spoonbread is nearly sweet enough to be dessert; sometimes no sugar is added at all.

Most spoonbreads follow essentially the same technique. First, cornmeal is cooked on the stovetop with a liquid (usually milk) until the mixture thickens and the tiny grains are soft. Butter, salt, eggs or yolks, and often sugar, are then added. If the egg whites are beaten separately, these are folded in, along with any seasonings. Some recipes don't call for whipping the whites, but I don't care for those versions. The mixture is poured into a heavy, straight-sided dish and baked until puffy and golden brown. The thick crust on top is delicious.

Spoonbread for dinner...and breakfast, too

The one thing all cooks agree on is that spoonbread should be served steaming hot, with lots of butter. While it's a perfect foil for any roast meat, I think it's just made for soaking up the juices from a nice piece of roast beef.

As much as I love spoonbread the first night, it's almost better the next morning. Sliced and skillet-browned (in butter, of course), and then laced with honey or maple syrup and dusted with confectioners' sugar, twice-cooked spoonbread rivals the best French toast.



RECIPE

Spoonbread

I like this recipe just the way it is, but feel free to vary it by adding sautéed diced onions, jalapeños, or red bell peppers. *Serves four to six as a side dish.*

4 eggs, separated
1 cup stone-ground cornmeal
3 cups whole milk
1 tsp. salt
Pinch sugar
2 Tbs. unsalted butter; more for the baking dish and for serving

Heat the oven to 350°F. Butter a deep (3-inch) 1½-qt. baking or soufflé dish (or a deep cast-iron skillet). In a large bowl, whip the egg whites until medium-stiff peaks form; set them aside.

In a mixing bowl, whisk together the cornmeal and 1 cup of the milk. In a medium saucepan, scald the remaining 2 cups of milk. Add the cornmeal mixture to the saucepan and cook, whisking constantly, over medium-low heat, until the mixture thickens (you'll begin to see the bottom of the pan as you whisk), about 10 min. Remove from the heat; stir in the salt, sugar, and butter. Add the egg yolks one at a time, whisking to combine after each addition. Gently fold in the egg whites. Pour the mixture into the prepared baking dish and bake until the spoonbread is puffed, with a golden brown crust, and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about 1 hour. Serve with lots of butter.

For spoonbread lovers, the golden crust is the best part.
Include a little of it in every spoonful.

Kay Fahey is a transplanted southerner (from Texas) who now lives in Reno, Nevada. ♦

Lemon Meringue Pie,

Whisk brown sugar syrup into barely beaten egg whites for a mountain of meringue

BY BRIGID CALLINAN

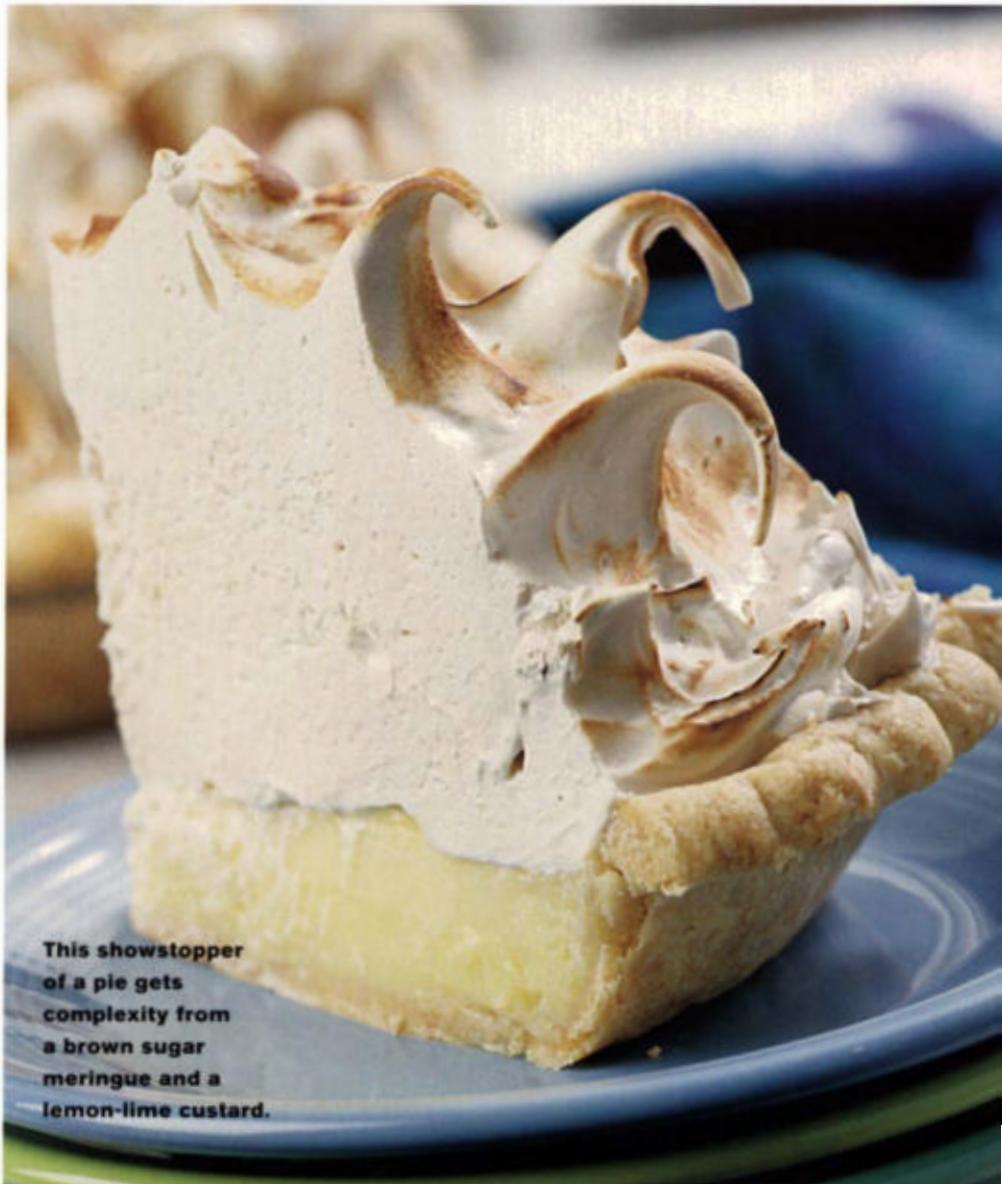
A great lemon meringue pie offers the best of all dessert worlds: a buttery, flaky crust; a cool, tangy filling; a fluffy swirl of soft meringue—the breakfast of champions!

With any popular dessert, recipe variations abound, and lemon meringue pie is no exception. But if the number of requests we get for the recipe is any indicator, the version served at Mustards Grill is a tour de force of the lemon meringue world. The Mustards pie features a voluptuous, cream-enriched filling—the combination of both lemon and lime juices strikes just the right note of tartness. But what really distinguishes this pie is its extra-tall, velvety brown sugar meringue topping. Brown sugar being more flavorful and complex than white, the resulting meringue has more character and intensity. It's a tasty snack all on its own.

A custard with lemon zest and lime juice has more depth of flavor

A sturdy, buttery crust is an all-important foundation of any good custard pie. The high proportion of butter makes a delicious crust that's impervious to liquid from the filling. The crust is blind-baked and brushed with a thin layer of egg wash to further waterproof it.

A stand mixer cuts the butter into the flour gently, leaving it in the uneven-sized bits necessary for a flaky pie crust.



Just put everything but the liquid in the mixer bowl, mix on the lowest speed with the paddle attachment until an uneven meal texture forms, and then add the liquid and continue mixing on low until the mixture just starts to come together. Check for the proper amount of liquid by squeezing a little bit of the dough in your hand; it should hold together without being wet and sticky.

While the crust is baking, prepare the filling. Lime juice and lemon zest give

this simple lemon custard nice depth of flavor; the heavy cream makes it smooth and luscious. This recipe is a lot faster and simpler than typical lemon meringue pie fillings, where eggs, sugar, and lemon juice are cooked with cornstarch and stirred constantly until thick. Here, you just whisk together the eggs and sugar---don't let them sit together unmixed or rubbery little egg-and-sugar pellets will form—and then whisk in the lemon and lime juices and cream. To ensure a smooth and

Taken to New Heights

uniform filling, you strain the custard and then add lemon zest and carefully pour the filling into the baked pie shell.

Bake the custard until it barely jiggles in the center—it will continue to cook a bit after the pie is removed from the oven.

An Italian meringue made with brown sugar seems not so sweet

Say what you want about the rest of the pie, the real showstopper is the mountain of brown sugar ambrosia at its top. And as with many delicious, interesting, and worthwhile recipes, a bit of voodoo is involved in its preparation. Though it's made in the style of an Italian meringue (meaning the sugar syrup is cooked until it reaches the firm-ball stage before being added to whisking egg whites), there are a few eccentricities about the procedure, namely the use of brown sugar in place of granulated and the stage of whipping at which the syrup is added to the whites.

I'm not in the habit of making product endorsements, but for this particular recipe, C&H golden brown sugar, which

is made from pure cane sugar, seems to work best. It's a West Coast brand, but the company will mail-order it through June 2000 to customers who live outside its distribution area (see Sources, p. 84). The few times that I've made the meringue using another brand of brown sugar, I've had inconsistent results (but the *Fine Cooking* test kitchen developed a recipe that works well with Domino brown sugar; see the recipe and the sidebar on p. 53).

In the usual preparation of Italian meringue, the whites are whipped almost to the firm-peak stage before the sugar syrup is added very slowly, with the mixer starting on medium-low speed. The meringue then deflates somewhat as the hot syrup cooks the whites, and it's whipped until it's completely cool. In this recipe, the egg whites are whipped only until they're frothy before the sugar syrup is added, slowly at first, and then quickly, with the mixer on high speed. By adding the syrup quickly and before the whites have much volume, the meringue

develops volume as it cooks, giving it greater loft. The meringue is shaped while still warm, and then it sets as it cools, leaving you with a tall, dramatic, and beautiful meringue that's unusually light in the mouth. A few things to remember about making this meringue:

- ◆ Have everything you need ready before beginning the meringue—a spatula for forming the dome, a spoon for making decorative waves, etc.
- ◆ Whites develop better volume if they are at room temperature; separate the eggs and let the whites sit out, covered, for a couple of hours.
- ◆ Use an accurate candy thermometer for the sugar syrup and always test it in boiling water before each use (at sea level, water boils at 212°F).
- ◆ When you add the sugar syrup, start slowly and then quickly add the rest. The mixture will look hopelessly wrong (watery and brown), but it whips up nicely in about three minutes.
- ◆ The whites will form peaks when they're ready, but they will still look

The meringue starts with a brown sugar syrup



Boil brown sugar and water over high heat. When the syrup hits the firm-ball stage, start whisking the egg whites.



Pour the syrup slowly at first (it will plop more than pour), and then more quickly, into the whisking whites.



When the meringue forms firm but not stiff peaks (it will still be warm), pile it high on the center of the pie.



Shape the warm meringue into a tall dome, pressing out large air pockets without deflating the foam.

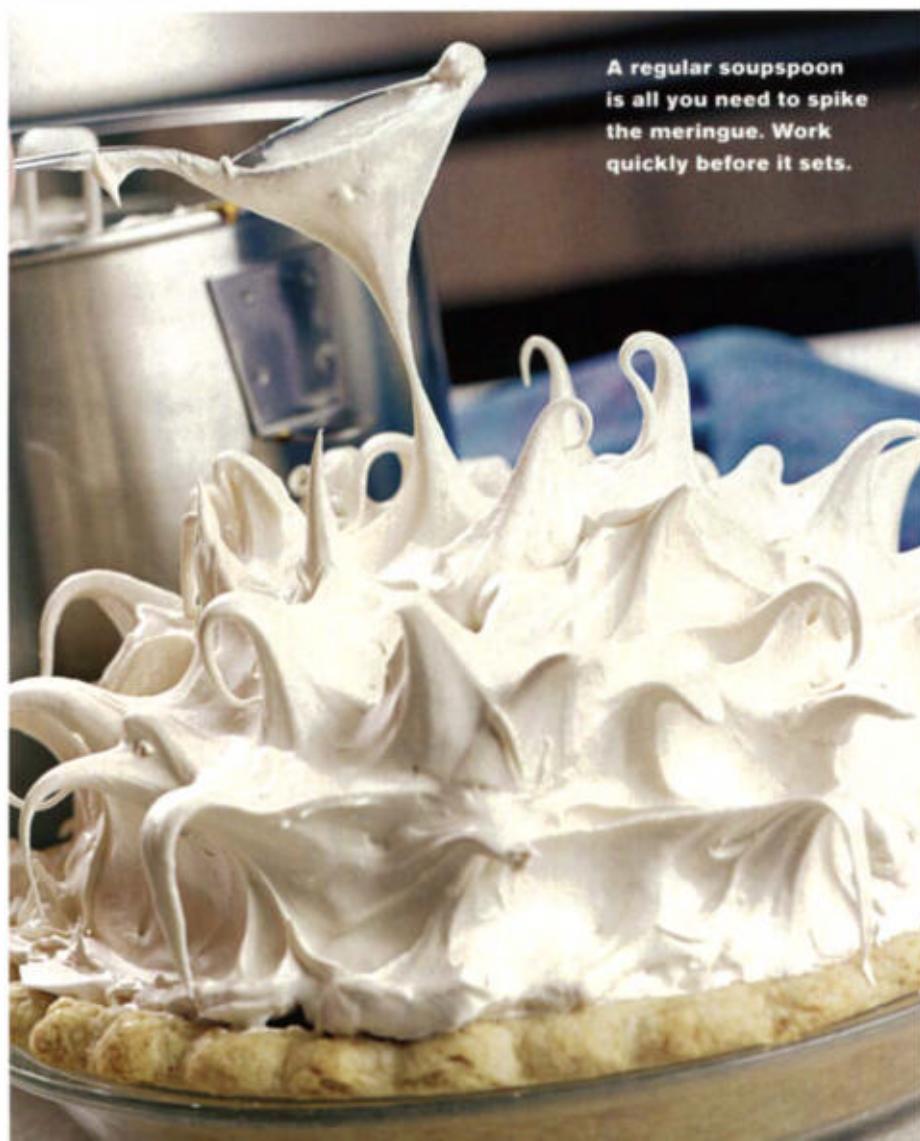
smooth and pliant, and the meringue will be quite warm. It's best to err on the side of underwhipping, only because the meringue will start to cool and become harder to shape.

♦ Work quickly with the meringue once you have it on the pie. This is one of the few pastry recipes that actually works better in a warm kitchen. The warmer it is, the more slowly the meringue will cool and become unworkable.

Once you form the meringue mountain and create decorative swirls and peaks with the back of a spoon, the last step is to brown it. If you happen to have a torch lying around the house, you can use it to lightly caramelize the whole meringue. If you are *sans* torch, brown the meringue under the broiler.

Keep the finished pie in the refrigerator so the custard stays cool. The meringue is at its best when served within a few hours; after several hours, it will start to weep and break down.

A regular soupspoon is all you need to spike the meringue. Work quickly before it sets.



Lemon-Lime Meringue Pie

You can make the pie filling up to two days before serving, but it's best to make the meringue the day the pie is served. Serves *ten to twelve*.

FOR THE CRUST:

9 oz. (2 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour

1 Tbs. sugar

1/4 tsp. salt

6 oz. (12 Tbs.) cold unsalted butter, cut into small pieces

About 2 Tbs. water

1/4 tsp. vanilla extract

1 large egg

FOR THE FILLING:

6 large eggs

1 1/2 cups sugar

1/2 cup fresh lime juice (from 4 to 6 limes)

1/4 cup fresh lemon juice (from about 2 lemons; grate the zest before juicing)

1 cup heavy cream

1 Tbs. grated lemon zest

FOR THE MERINGUE, USING C&H GOLDEN BROWN SUGAR:

1 1/2 cups firmly packed golden brown C&H pure cane sugar

1/2 cup water

3/4 cup egg whites, at room temperature (from about 6 large eggs)

1/4 tsp. cream of tartar

FOR THE MERINGUE, USING DOMINO BROWN SUGAR:

1 1/4 cups firmly packed light brown Domino pure cane sugar

3/4 cup granulated white sugar

1/2 cup water

1 cup egg whites, at room temperature (from about 8 large eggs)

1/4 tsp. cream of tartar



A kitchen torch is ideal for browning the meringue evenly, but a flash under the broiler will also suffice.

To make the crust—In a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine the flour, sugar, salt, and butter and mix on the lowest speed until a coarse meal texture forms, about 2 min. With the mixer running, add the 2 Tbs. water and the vanilla; continue mixing on low until the dough clumps together, about 45 seconds. If the dough remains too dry and crumbly to form a cohesive mass, add a bit more water. Gather the dough into a ball and wrap in plastic, pressing on the plastic to flatten the dough into a disk. Refrigerate until the dough is firm enough to roll, about 30 min.

On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough to a $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch-thick circle, about 11 inches across. Transfer to a 9-inch deep-dish pie pan and flute the edges, if you like. Freeze the crust until hard, about 40 min. Heat the oven to 350°F.

When the crust is hard, line it with foil and fill the foil with pie weights or dried beans. Put the pan on a baking sheet, bake for 40 min., and then remove the weights and foil and bake until the crust is golden brown and feels dry, another 20 to 30 min. Whisk the egg with about 1 tsp. water. Brush the egg on the crust bottom and sides and bake the crust until the egg is set and dry, about 3 min.

To make the filling—While the pie crust is baking, in a medium bowl, whisk together the eggs and sugar until combined. Add the lime and lemon juices and whisk until smooth. Whisk in the heavy cream and strain the mixture into a pitcher or batter bowl (a large Pyrex measuring cup works well). Stir in the zest. When the crust is done, pour the filling into the crust without removing it from the oven, and



The finished pie is a short-lived wonder so plan to serve it soon after it's made.

A puzzling difference between sugars

When we made Brigid's meringue recipe using our usual brand of light brown sugar, which is Domino, it was sweeter, softer, and only half as tall as we knew Brigid's to be. Several adjustments later, we still couldn't produce a light, tall meringue, so we tried the original recipe with Brigid's brand of brown sugar—C&H. This time, the meringue had great loft and it was firm yet still light.

We're stumped as to why two brands of brown sugar (both labeled pure cane) would produce

such strikingly different results. Representatives for C&H and Domino couldn't solve the puzzle either, though they noted that brown sugars do vary in the amount of molasses, moisture, and invert sugar they contain. We found that by using more egg whites, replacing some of the brown sugar with granulated sugar, and raising the temperature of the sugar syrup, we could get a successful meringue with Domino. This version and Brigid's original C&H method are both given here.

The modified Domino recipe produces a meringue that's more like a cousin to the C&H version than a twin. It tends to weep sooner, too, so if you're using Domino, plan to serve the pie within a couple hours of making it. To try Brigid's original recipe, we recommend that you use C&H. The company will ship small orders to *Fine Cooking* readers outside its distribution area through June 2000 (see Sources, p. 84).

—The *Fine Cooking* test kitchen and editors

reduce the oven temperature to 325°F. Bake the pie until the center is just set, about 50 min. Remove the pie from the oven, cool it on a rack, and then refrigerate until cold, at least 6 hours.

To make the meringue with C&H brown sugar—Put the brown sugar in a small, deep, heavy-based saucepan and cover with the water. In a stand mixer fitted with the whip attachment, put the egg whites and cream of tartar. Attach a candy thermometer to the sugar saucepan and boil the sugar over high heat. When the sugar syrup reaches 246°F, start whipping the egg whites on high speed until very foamy and just starting to gain some volume, about 30 seconds. Keep whipping the egg whites, remove the thermometer from the pan, and very carefully and slowly pour about one-third of the sugar syrup into the mixing egg whites (it plops out in drops), avoiding the whip. Add the remaining syrup in a faster, steady stream. Continue whipping the whites until they become voluminous and form firm but not stiff peaks, about 3 min.; the meringue should still be warm.

To make the meringue with Domino brown sugar—Put the brown sugar and white sugar in a small, deep, heavy-based saucepan and cover with the water. In a stand mixer fitted with the whip attachment, put the egg whites and cream of tartar. Attach a candy thermometer to the sugar saucepan and boil the sugar over high heat. When the sugar syrup reaches 248°F, start whipping the egg whites on

medium-high speed until they're very foamy, white, and have increased in volume, about 45 seconds. Keep whipping the egg whites; when the temperature of the syrup hits 254°F, remove the thermometer, set the mixer to medium speed, and carefully and slowly pour about one-third of the sugar syrup into the mixing egg whites (it plops out in drops), avoiding the whip. Add the remaining syrup in a faster, steady stream. Increase the speed to high and whip the whites until they have become voluminous and form firm but not stiff peaks, about 3 min.; the meringue should still be warm.

To create the spiky meringue dome—Scrape the meringue from the bowl onto the chilled pie and, using a rubber spatula, create a smooth dome (avoid pressing on the meringue). With the back of a soup spoon, make decorative peaks in the meringue, working quickly before the meringue cools completely. If you have a kitchen torch, use it to brown the meringue. If not, set a broiler or oven rack to a lower rung and heat the broiler. Set the pie on a baking sheet and put it under the broiler, turning it several times to brown the meringue as evenly as possible.

Store the meringued pie in the refrigerator. The Domino sugar meringue is at its best when served within a few hours, but the C&H version should keep nicely for up to 12 hours.

Brigid Callinan is the pastry chef at Mustards Grill in Yountville, California. ♦

The addition of a wheat starter gives this rye bread a lighter texture and a satisfying, crisp crust



A Rye Bread That's Robust Yet Subtle

BY DAVID NORMAN

My inspiration and incentive to start baking bread came from living and studying abroad, where great bread is a part of almost all daily meals. In Sweden and Germany, where I spent most of my time (I was studying German literature), my typical meals consisted of cured meats, cheeses, preserves, and other accompaniments to the true centerpiece—bread. In fact, supper in German—*Abentbrot*—is literally translated as “evening bread.”

Most of the breads I enjoyed there were made with a large proportion of rye flour, including dark pumpernickel and dense rye bread. Rye grows more readily than wheat in the harsher climates of northern Europe, and from this robust, hearty grain came the robust, hearty breads we associate with the region. Because of baking characteristics that are different from wheat flour, breads made with a large proportion of rye flour are heavier and more compact. This is also true of your typical New York style rye—the bread we think of when we think “pastrami on rye”—quite chewy and often studded with caraway seeds.

That's not the kind of rye bread I'm making here.



Make a dough from two starters

David Norman uses two starters in his rye bread, one made with rye flour and one with wheat.

To make each starter, dissolve the yeast in the warm water in a medium bowl and add the flour by hand until well blended.

Add the portioned starters to the flour and mix by hand



Both starters must rest, covered at room temperature, for 12 to 20 hours. The rye starter has the texture of very soft clay.



Portion the starters by weight—
7½ ounces of the rye and
5 ounces of the wheat, which is
shown here. Put the weighed
starters in a medium bowl.



Mix the flour and salt in a large bowl.
Dissolve the yeast in the water in
a measuring cup, add that to the
starters, and use your hands to
combine well.



Add the starters to the flour and salt and mix by hand until the mixture comes together in a sticky, shaggy mass.

Knead thoroughly and don't add flour



Turn the dough out onto a clean surface that has *not* been floured. Knead by pushing the dough away from you, folding it back toward you, turning it a quarter turn, and pushing it away from you again.



The dough will be very sticky, but resist the urge to add flour; instead, use a pastry scraper to bring up any dough that sticks. Continue kneading for about 8 minutes.



To get the smoothest, best-developed dough, allow the dough to rest for about 10 minutes, covered with a damp towel, and then resume kneading for another few minutes. To see if the dough has been sufficiently kneaded, poke it with your finger; it should spring right back.

starter. In most cases, you will have a coarser flour and will need to add less water. Start with about 1 cup of water and then go by feel: you want a mixture that holds its shape yet squishes easily between your fingers when you make a fist. Spackle, papier-mâché, and the soft, silty sand at the edge of a lake are some things that come to mind when I mix the starter.

Add wheat flour to increase gluten

The main difference between rye flour and wheat flour is their ability to form gluten. Gluten is what develops when wheat flour is mixed with water; it gives a loaf of bread its structure and traps the gases given off during fermentation. These gases expand and lighten the loaf.

Rye flour doesn't contain the two proteins that work together in wheat flour to develop superior gluten. It does, however, contain a larger amount of a gummy substance called pentosans, which can hold a dough made with mostly rye flour together, and which does trap some gas. Well-made loaves of rye bread will have significant and visible aeration, but they'll always be much denser than wheat

breads. What I've come up with here is essentially a wheat-based bread flavored with a rye starter, which for me unites the best of both grains.

Temper rye's quick ferment with a starter

Rye flour has a higher sugar content than wheat; that, along with other variables, causes rye to ferment quickly. This can affect both the flavor and the texture of the bread. During fermentation, yeast converts the sugars into carbon dioxide and alcohol. The carbon dioxide makes the bread rise while the alcohol adds flavor. A long, slow fermentation provides the most flavor because, in addition to the alcohol, acids and other compounds develop, deepen, and mature. But the yeast consumes rye's sugars so quickly that a long rising time is out of the question.

A starter offers a head start on fermentation. To achieve a full flavor before the final dough is made, I make a yeast starter with rye flour and allow it to ferment overnight. And because I want a lighter, airier texture for my bread, I also use a second starter made with wheat flour, specifically bread flour. As it ferments overnight, it will develop a

Allow the dough to rise until not quite doubled



Put the dough in a large, lightly oiled bowl, and cover it with a damp cloth. Allow it to rise in a warm (but not hot), draft-free area until not quite doubled, about 1 hour.



When the dough reaches this size, gently deflate it and give it a quick knead or two. Return the dough to the bowl and let it rest another 1/2 hour.

Divide the dough and then let it rest



Cut the dough in half and gently flatten each piece into a disk. Fold an edge up, overlapping the disk by two-thirds. Rotate the disk slightly and fold again; repeat, overlapping the folds (there will be about five) until you reach the original fold. As you fold, gently stretch the underside of the disk. Roll the dough over so the smooth side is up.



Stretch the surface taut by gently pressing the dough against the work surface with cupped hands, tucking any excess dough underneath. Take care not to rip the surface. Cover the balls with a damp cloth and let them rest for 15 to 20 minutes.

structure that will enhance the texture of the loaf, and as a bonus will also help deepen the flavor of the bread. For optimum flavor and performance, the starters should sit at room temperature for at least 12 hours and up to 20. You won't use all of either starter, but it's difficult to make any less. You can keep the leftover starters in the refrigerator and use them up to a week later, but the longer you hold them, the stronger the flavor will be, and the texture of the bread may be denser.

Give the dough a good knead on an unfloured surface

Because this recipe is really a wheat-based bread flavored with a rye starter, you must knead the dough in order to develop the gluten network. Water helps bind the proteins together, but working the dough is necessary to develop them into the stretchy web that will trap the gas.

The dough will be sticky, but resist the urge to add flour to it or to your surface. Adding flour at this stage will only make the bread dry. If the dough sticks to the surface initially, use a pastry scraper to

peel it off. After a few minutes of kneading, the gluten will begin to develop, and the dough will become less sticky and easier to work with.

Knead in two stages. For the smoothest dough—and to give yourself a break—it's best to knead for about 8 minutes, let it rest for 10 minutes, and then finish kneading. Properly kneaded dough will feel smooth and elastic. I poke the dough to test it; if it springs back right away, my kneading is done.

Pay attention during the rising. As noted earlier, rye ferments quickly for several reasons, including the fact that it has more sugars available for yeast to consume. This means that breads made with rye rise quickly. Check on the dough before the hour rising time is up; you don't even want it to double. An overrisen dough loses its elasticity because the gluten has been stretched beyond its limits. Such a dough will be difficult to shape, and the resulting bread will be flat and dense. The higher the rye content, the more watchful the baker must be; a rye dough is more delicate, and the margin for error is smaller. If your dough is close to doubling before the hour is up, punch it down earlier than directed. *(Continued)*

Shape the dough into loaves



Set the dough balls, seam side up, on a lightly floured surface. Flatten one ball into a rectangle about 7 inches across and 8½ inches long.



Fold the top towards you about two-thirds of the way down and press the dough with the heel of your palms to seal.



Pick the dough up and turn it around 180 degrees; the fold will be nearest you and the single edge farthest from you.

As you shape the dough, stretch it to its limit

After the second rise, you'll need to divide the dough and let it rest briefly again. For this rest, I shape the dough into balls by forming the halves into disks, pulling the edges into the center, and stretching the smooth skin on top taut (see the photos on p. 57). This starts the structure of the gluten web in the right direction and lets the dough relax so that in its final shaping it can be stretched even more without tearing. This stretching helps the dough hold up to the expansion that occurs in the oven.

The dough gets further stretched as you shape it into loaves. As you fold and shape the bread, you're creating tension over the dough's surface so that it will just about pop open when slashed with the razor. For nicely shaped loaves, be sure to seal your folds well using the heel of your hand. These seams will face strong pressure as the dough proofs and then expands during baking.

Mimic a baker's oven in your home

When the loaf hits the intense heat of the oven, all the gases trapped inside expand, and the loaf's volume increases significantly. Bread bakers call this "oven spring." Two things will help enhance this effect, giving you loaves closer to those from a baker's oven: intense heat and moisture.

A pizza stone will deliver a more intense bottom heat. Heat the oven—with the stone in it—for at least 45 minutes before baking, so it really heats up.

Create steam to keep the crust moist during the initial stage of baking. This is important: you don't want a hard crust to form before the expansion is complete. Be careful with the spray bottle and aim for the loaves. Don't hit the oven's light bulb with the water or it may shatter. And don't put out the pilot light in a gas stove: I did that once and by the time I realized what had happened, I'd wrecked my bread.

Experiment with flavors that complement this rye

Much of the rye bread familiar to Americans is flavored with caraway (even the non-seeded ryes often contain caraway powder). In fact, some people so associate this flavor with rye that they don't think a rye without it tastes like rye. For this recipe, however, I didn't want the assertive flavor of caraway to overpower the subtler earthiness of the rye itself. There are other spices, however, that marry well with the rye flavor and could provide variations to this recipe. Try kneading in ½ teaspoon of ground coriander or a bit of ground anise or fennel seeds.

The earthy flavor of this rye bread enhances delicately smoked or cured meats and fish. Or try it with a rich soup, like split pea or beef barley. The French traditionally enjoy rye bread with oysters; the oysters' brininess is delightful against the robust rye. This is also a great bread for a ham and cheese sandwich—or even pastrami.



Fold the top toward you to about two-thirds of the way down (like a business letter) and press the seam again to seal. Now fold the dough again, this time in half, bringing the top edge all the way to the bottom edge. Seal the edge with the heel of your hand, flattening the tight cylinder somewhat.

RECIPE

Rye Bread

The amounts of flour and starters are given in weight measurement only; you'll need to use a scale. The leftover starters will keep for up to a week in the refrigerator. *Yields two loaves.*

FOR THE RYE STARTER:

1 to 2 cups lukewarm water, depending on your flour (see text, pp. 55-56)

1/8 tsp. active dry yeast

8 oz. finely ground whole-rye flour

FOR THE WHEAT STARTER:

1 cup lukewarm water

1/8 tsp. active dry yeast

8 oz. unbleached bread flour

FOR THE DOUGH:

1 tsp. active dry yeast

1 1/4 cups lukewarm water

7 1/2 oz. rye starter

5 oz. wheat starter

2 1/4 tsp. salt

19 oz. unbleached bread flour

For the method, review the text and then follow the photos and captions starting on p. 54.

David Norman is the executive chef at *Ecce Panis* of New York. He recently taught baking at the French Culinary Institute in New York City. ♦



Roll the somewhat flattened dough into a cylinder about 11 inches long, tucking in the ends and pinching them lightly. Repeat with the other ball of dough. Put the loaves on the back of a well-floured baking sheet or pizza peel. Cover with a damp cloth and let rise in a warm, draft-free area until almost doubled, about 45 minutes. While the loaves rise, get your oven ready: put a baking stone on the middle shelf and a heavy, ovenproof, rimmed pan on the bottom shelf or oven floor, and set it for 450°F.

Bake in a steamy oven



Slash the tops of the risen loaves perpendicularly with a razor blade, making 4 or 5 shallow cuts. Carefully pour a small amount of water into the hot pan in the oven and quickly close the door to create some steam.



Place the baking sheet or the peel on top of the stone and quickly pull it away from under the loaves so that they drop onto the stone. Spray the loaves with water from a spray bottle and add a little more water to the pan. Bake the bread for 10 minutes. Reduce the oven temperature to 400°F and bake for another 10 minutes. Rotate the loaves and bake until they're an even brown color and have a slightly hollow sound when tapped on the bottom, another 15 to 18 minutes.



Cool the bread on a wire rack. For the best flavor, don't slice the bread until it has cooled almost completely.

Making Authentic

A light dough with a savory or sweet filling makes tender dumplings

TEXT BY
COLE CHABON;
RECIPES BY
MARIE JARZEMSKI



Meat-filled pierogis make a light and homey supper.

In the Ukrainian community where I grew up, I spent countless hours watching the women in my family work what seemed like magic as they cooked delicious, unforgettable food. Over the years I learned some of their secrets and figured that one day I'd inherit the book that all these delicacies sprang from so I could learn the rest. As it turned out, though, there was no book—the recipes were inside of these women, and many were buried with them when they died.

So, years later when I got a job cooking at the Warsaw Café in Philadelphia, I got a delightful reintroduction to the food I remembered. One of my jobs was making pierogis, the tender dumplings of my past, filled with potatoes, meat, or a dried apricot compote. Finally, the secret of pierogis was re-

vealed to me. So here it is—for everyone else who never got a chance to ask for the recipe.

For tender dough, use sour cream and knead lightly

The most important factor in this dough is the fat that binds it because it also lightens the texture of the finished dough. Traditional Polish cooks use vegetable shortening, but Marie and I find that sour cream works wonders for a supple dough that's firm enough to enfold a variety of fillings.

For the tenderest pierogi dough, knead gently. When I first started making pierogis, they came out a bit leaden and chewy because I was kneading the dough too vigorously. The gentle motion you'll master is a kind of sequence: cradling the ball of dough

Pierogis



To knead pierogi dough, use a lifting motion, cradling it gently...



...and then dropping the dough on the work surface.



Knead until the dough is smooth and slightly sticky, about 2 minutes.

with your fingers, lifting it up, and letting it fall out of your hands. This short knead—just two minutes or so, until the dough is smooth and slightly sticky—is followed by a 20-minute rest to let the dough relax.

Roll dough balls into disks. You'll pinch off about a tablespoon of dough and roll it into a ball that's 1½ inches in diameter (if in doubt, go for larger, which makes for easier filling). You'll then roll the ball with a rolling pin into a disk that's about 3 inches in diameter and between ⅛ and ¼ inch thick. Some cooks roll out the dough and then stamp circles with a cookie cutter, but we find that you end up losing dough and then overworking the scraps, which results in a less tender pierogi. To stuff the dumplings, follow the photos on pp. 62–63.

Pierogis can be single- or double-cooked

Once the pierogis have been filled, cook them right away or the dough will dry out and cook unevenly.

When they float to the surface, give them two minutes more. Put on at least 5 quarts of water—pierogis need a lot of room to roll around—and bring it to a good rolling boil. Drop in the dumplings one by one, giving a gentle stir with a wooden spoon to make sure they don't stick to the bottom or to one another.

For puffy-crisp texture, sauté in butter. Simple boiled pierogis are delicious, but the meat and potato pierogis are especially good when they're cooked a second time—browned to an even golden color in vegetable oil or butter, where they'll develop a lovely puffy crispness. Then drain them on paper towels and enjoy. *Nostroivia!* (Recipes follow)



**Potato pierogis
get a little tang
from sour cream
and texture from
shredded cabbage
in the filling.**

RECIPES

Pierogi Dough & Cooking Method

It's important not to overwork the dough: brief, gentle mixing and kneading will give you a dough that's tender, not gummy. *Yields enough dough to make 40 pierogis.*

**15½ oz. (3½ cups) all-purpose flour; more for dusting
3 large eggs
2 Tbs. sour cream
1 cup water; more as needed
Butter or vegetable oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste**

In a large bowl, combine the flour, eggs, sour cream, and ½ cup of the water. Stir, beating the eggs as you mix. Gradually add the rest of the water, stirring until the mixture begins to come together. Turn the dough onto a well-floured surface. Knead gently with your fingertips, lifting the dough off the counter and dropping it down (the dropping technique is key for delicate and pliable dough), taking care not to overwork it. Knead until the ingredients are blended and the dough is smooth on the outside and slightly sticky when poked, 2 to 5 min. Gather into a ball, wrap in plastic, and let rest for at least 20 min. while you make the filling.

While you fill the pierogis (see the photos at right), put 5 qt. water on to boil. Drop the pierogis in batches into the boiling water, stirring occasionally. When they float to the top, cook for another 2 to 4 min.; bite into one to check that there's no chalky line. Drain in a colander or fish them out with a spider and put them in a bowl. Sauté as described below or simply add a dollop of butter and salt and pepper; jostle the bowl to toss.

To sauté the pierogis—Warm 1½ Tbs. butter or 3 Tbs. vegetable oil in a sauté pan over medium-high heat. Without crowding the pan, add the boiled, drained pierogis and sauté until golden brown and puffy on both sides.

Potato Filling

A high-starch potato like an Idaho is best at absorbing the flavors of the vegetables in this filling. *Yields enough filling for about 40 pierogis.*

**3 medium baking potatoes (about 1½ lb.), peeled and cut in 1-inch slices
2 Tbs. unsalted butter; more as needed
1 Tbs. vegetable oil
1 small onion, chopped
1 clove garlic, finely minced
½ tsp. dried thyme
2 cups finely shredded white cabbage (about ¼ very small cabbage)
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
2 Tbs. freshly grated Parmesan cheese
1 tsp. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**

Put the potatoes in a pot with just enough cold salted water to cover them and boil until soft, 15 to 20 min. Meanwhile, melt the butter with the oil in a large sauté pan over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic, and thyme. Cook until the onions are translucent, about 2 min. Add the cabbage and cook, stirring occasionally, until the cabbage starts to soften and brown at the edges, about 8 min. Lower the heat and continue cooking until the cabbage and onion are nicely browned and caramelized, about 20 min. Season with salt and pepper. You may need to add 1 Tbs. or more of butter or oil, as the mixture will absorb quite a bit of fat. Set aside to cool.

When the potatoes are tender, drain them in a colander and press lightly with a dry kitchen towel to dry them thoroughly. Return the potatoes to their hot pot and shake them dry. Remove the pot from the heat; add the cooled cabbage mixture, the cheese, and the parsley. Mash the ingredients until they're well blended and there are no more potato lumps; you may want to use a stiff whisk. Season again with salt and pepper. Set aside to cool while you roll out the pierogi dough.

Shape and fill the pierogis

With lightly floured hands, roll the dough into 1½-inch balls. You'll end up with 36 to 40 dough balls.



Meat Filling

These make a satisfying supper served with a tossed salad. *Yields enough filling for about 40 pierogis.*

1 Tbs. unsalted butter
1 large onion, finely chopped (to yield 2 cups)
2 large cloves garlic, finely chopped
½ tsp. dried thyme
½ tsp. sweet paprika
1 ¼ lb. ground veal
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
¼ cup plain toasted breadcrumbs
6 oz. white button mushrooms, wiped clean and finely chopped (to yield about 2 cups)
2 Tbs. soy sauce
1 Tbs. chopped fresh dill
1 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

In a large sauté pan over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the onion, garlic, thyme, and paprika. Cook until onions are soft, about 2 min. Crumble the veal into the pan, breaking up large chunks. Season with salt and pepper. Sauté the mixture until the liquid starts evaporating and the veal loses its pink color, about 10 min. Turn the heat to high, and when the meat juices have evaporated, stir in the breadcrumbs. Lower the heat to medium. The mixture will start to brown and may stick slightly to the bottom of the pan. This is essential for flavor; just continue stirring. Add the mushrooms and soy sauce and cook until the mushroom juices have almost completely evaporated, about 3 min. Remove the pan from the heat. Stir in the herbs; season with salt and pepper. Set aside to cool while you roll out the pierogi dough. Stir the mixture again just before filling the pierogis.

Apricot Filling

These are delicious for brunch or dessert, and they're just as good with a simple sprinkle of sugar as they are with the toasted almond topping. If you like, serve with whipped cream or a little browned butter. *Yields enough filling for about 40 pierogis.*

FOR THE FILLING:
12 oz. dried apricots
1 cup water
2 strips (1x3 inches) lemon zest
2 Tbs. unsalted butter
2 Tbs. sugar
1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
2 tsp. brandy
Pinch salt

FOR THE SUGARED ALMONDS:
1 Tbs. unsalted butter
1 cup sliced almonds
1 Tbs. sugar
½ tsp. ground cinnamon

To make the filling—In a medium saucepan, combine the apricots, water, and zest. Cover and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook until very tender and the liquid is almost evaporated (you'll have 2 to 3 Tbs. left), about 12 min. Remove the zest, transfer the mixture to a food processor, and coarsely purée with the butter, sugar, lemon juice, brandy, and salt.

To make the sugared almonds—In a medium skillet over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the almonds and sauté, stirring constantly, until lightly browned, about 5 min. Add the sugar and cinnamon and cook, stirring, until golden, about 1 min.



A topping of sugared almonds gives delicious textural contrast to apricot-filled pierogis.

Cole Chabon is the catering manager for Manna, which prepares and delivers food to homebound people with AIDS. Marie Jarzemski is the chef-owner of the Warsaw Café in Philadelphia. ♦



Hold the dough flat in your palm, dust off excess flour, and spoon the filling onto the center (a generous tablespoon for meat or potato; a generous teaspoon for apricot). Fold the round in half to close it.



With a small rolling pin or a dowel, gently roll out each ball into a 3- to 3½-inch round about ¼ inch thick on a well-floured surface. Keep the dough balls and disks covered as you work so they won't dry out.



Seal the pierogi by pulling the edges away from the filling and pinching them together. To ensure a proper seal, pinch the edge shut once more, working from one end to the other. Set the filled pierogis on a floured work surface or baking sheet and cover with a dry towel or plastic wrap until they're ready to boil.



At **Bellwether Farms**, the Callahan family makes cheese from their own flock of sheep as well as from local cows. Many of the cheeses, like their crescenza, ricotta, and pecorino, are based on traditional Italian cheeses, but some of their newer varieties, including the cow's milk blue, seemed all-Sonoma—original and top-quality—to us when we tasted them.

In Search of Culinary Craftsmanship

Sonoma County, California, offers fertile land, a favorable climate, and the right karma for artisan food producers

BY MARTHA HOLMBERG

For people who really love to cook, discovering a wonderful ingredient can be as exciting and fulfilling as getting a new cookbook, working with a new appliance, or dining at a new restaurant. No matter how skilled a cook you are, your final meal ultimately depends on the quality of the ingredients you begin with—the freshest organic greens, perfectly ripened handmade cheese, crusty bread baked in a wood-burning oven, a glass of wine made from grapes grown under the attention of a master winemaker.

While there are, of course, good-quality mass-produced products, the most distinctive products—the ones that make a difference in your cooking—more often come from producers who work on a small scale using top-quality raw materials, labor-intensive methods, and lots of devotion to their craft.

Fine Cooking took a trip last October to Sonoma County, California, to visit some artisans whose products we admire and whose efforts and talents we applaud and are amazed by. Along with about a hundred *Fine Cooking* readers, we watched dough being kneaded and baked; cheese being shaped and aged, wine grapes being crushed and fermented, olives ripening in the sun. We tasted, questioned, mused, debated, and then left inspired...to become better at our own crafts and to seek out products from artisans like these in our own regions, to encourage and support those dedicated to making the products that make us all so happy to be foodies.



Photo credits where noted: Prince Rutherford, Bellwether and Bokisch photo: Amy Albert; Bokisch photo: Scott Mollen.





DaVero owners Ridgely Evers and Colleen McGlynn now have 4,500 olive trees, all of which began with bareroot stock from a 350-year old farm in Lucca, Italy. The full-flavored oil that participants sampled (along with a killer pizza that Ridgley made) comes from four varietals—Leccino, Frantoio, Pendolino, and Maurino—and from gentle stone crushing of the olives in a hydraulic press.



Bob Benziger punches down the cap in a tank full of fermenting grapes at **Benziger Family Ranch**, giving participants an early taste of what will become a delicious wine. The Benziger family knows their land intimately, and they plant and vinify their wines to bring out the best from each geological and climatic zone in their vineyards.



At **Preston Vineyards & Bakery**, the whole is much more than the sum of its very good parts. Yes, there's the winery. And yes, there's the light-filled bakery wing with a wood-burning brick oven. But the atmosphere of enjoyment and good living, and Lou Preston's respect for his craft, are what participants may remember most.





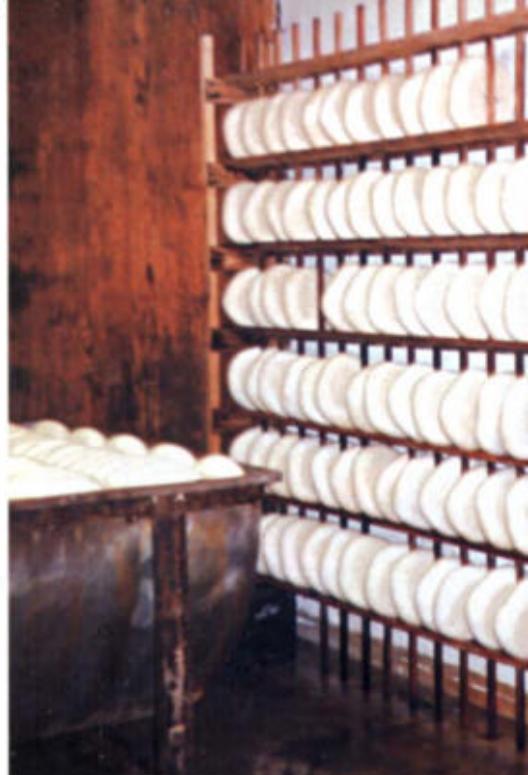
Darolyn Hurst of **Twin Hill Ranch** brought samples of some of the 40 apple varieties grown on her 100-acre family farm, where all the apples are picked by hand. In addition to her apple knowledge, she shared some of the lore and challenges of family farming in the region.



Redwood Hill Farm makes award-winning cheeses and yogurts, all from milk produced by the dairy's herd of over 400 goats. In addition to cheesemaker-owner Jennifer Bice's exacting standards (no hormones, all natural ingredients, imported cultures), pure affection probably plays a role in the quality of the product—Jennifer knows each goat by name.



Westside Farms was the ideal site for tasting fall apples from Twin Hill and hand-made cheeses from Redwood Hill. Ron and Pam Kaiser have resurrected the property, which had suffered years of neglect before they bought it. Now the Russian River setting includes vineyards, winter squash, pumpkins, gourds, and decorative corn crops in the fall, as well as berries in summer.



At first glance, the aging room at **Vella Cheese** doesn't seem like anything special—rows of wooden racks, concrete floor, a decidedly "cheesy" smell in the air—but it's really a gold mine. Once we had tasted the hand-crafted cheeses made by Ig Vella and his crew, we knew those wheels upon wheels of Cheddar, Asiago, and Dry Jack were the culinary equivalent of gold bullion.



At the **Artisan Bakery** tour, the word mentioned often by baker-owner Craig Ponsford was "discipline," and we certainly saw discipline in action—as well as devotion. Ponsford and his staff meticulously mix, turn, time, knead, shape, and bake a wide range of breads, including a special baguette that he made just for the *Fine Cooking* visitors. We also tasted some olive oils from B. R. Cohn during the Artisan stop.



On the second day of *Fine Cooking's* California trip, participants spent the day at the **Culinary Institute of America's** Greystone campus (in St. Helena in the Napa Valley), where we sharpened our knowledge of food and wine pairings in a seminar by Holly Peterson Mondavi, and worked furiously (with toques on heads, of course) in the teaching kitchens, creating two meals that could assuredly be labeled "lavish spreads."



More online

For more details of *Fine Cooking's* California Experience 1999, please see our web site (www.finecooking.com), where we've got more photographs, a listing of the many purveyors who served their tasty wares at the opening night reception, and our Virtual Farmers' Market, which highlights the major contributors to the event.

Martha Holmberg is the editor of *Fine Cooking*. ♦

Better Cooking through Convection

Hot air circulating through your oven cooks food more evenly, at lower temperatures, and often with better and faster results

BY SUSIE MIDDLETON

Help! I've got a new convection oven, and I don't know what to do with it." I hear this plea a lot from cooks who have just redone their kitchens, and also from people who are intrigued about convection cooking but aren't sure what the big deal is. The answer is simple: You can cook just about anything in a convection oven, and while learning to use one certainly isn't a big deal, the results you get—evenly cooked cookies, crisp pastry, and juicy, well-browned meats—are.

To get comfortable with a convection oven, you just have to start using it. The easiest way to do this is to experiment with your favorite recipes by cooking them at a slightly lower temperature and for a slightly shorter time than you normally would (see Guidelines, p. 71). But before you do that, or before you follow through with your plans to buy a convection oven, read on to learn how these ovens work, how different models vary, and what kind of results you can expect.

A convection oven circulates hot air with a fan

Unlike conventional radiant (also called thermal) ovens, convection ovens have a fan that continuously circulates air through the oven cavity. When hot air is blowing onto food, as opposed to merely

surrounding it, the food tends to cook more quickly. A short version of the scientific explanation for this is that moving air speeds up the rate of heat trans-

ference that naturally occurs when air of two different temperatures converges. To help understand this, consider wind chill: When cold air blows against you on a blustery winter day, you feel colder more quickly than you do on a windless day of the same temperature.

This acceleration effect is one reason for the superior results you get from convection. The rush of heat speeds up the chemical reactions that occur when food cooks. The butter in a pie crust or a croissant releases its steam quickly, creating flaky layers. The skin of a roasting chicken renders its fat and browns more quickly, so the meat cooks faster and stays juicier. The sugars in roasting vegetables and potatoes begin caramelizing sooner, creating crisp edges, moist interiors, and deep flavors. Overall, food cooked in a convection oven is usually done about 25% faster than it is in a conventional oven.

Another benefit of all this circulating hot air is more even cooking. In a conventional oven, baking three racks of cookies at the same time is asking for trouble. The cookies on the bottom rack closest to the heating element, as well as those on the top rack where hot air rises, will be overcooked before the cookies on the middle rack are done. Convection cooking, with hot air moving all around the oven, can eliminate hot and cool spots for more even cooking (see the sidebar at right). And when you can bake 50 cookies at once, your oven is operating a lot more efficiently. This even heating feature gives a great boost to roasts, too. For instance, if you roast a turkey in a convection oven, it will brown

Pros' tips for convection cooking

Flo Braker, baker and food writer, Palo Alto, California: "I love my convection oven for roasting, and I've baked fabulous pizza with convection. I also find it produces crisp tartlet shells, and it works well for freeform breads, with the air circulating all around them. But I haven't been as happy using it with other baked goods, especially dense or high-fat baked goodies like pound cake."



Conventional oven



Convection oven

The cookie convection test

We recently gave our test kitchen director's new convection wall ovens a test-spin. We baked three sheets of butter pecan cookies in the top oven with the convection turned on and the temperature 25°F below what the recipe called for. We baked three more sheets of cookies in the lower oven with no convection,

just the standard radiant heat set at the temperature the recipe called for. The cookies on each rack in the top oven (a total of 45 cookies) all cooked evenly, and in the suggested time the recipe called for (16 minutes).

In the lower, non-convection, oven, after 7 or 8 minutes, the cookies on the lowest rack were

obviously browning too much, too fast. A few minutes later, we pulled out that whole sheet, which had darkened beyond desirability. Meanwhile, the cookies on the middle rack were barely cooking. The top rack did cook perfectly in 15 minutes, but the middle rack plodded along for a few more minutes before being done.

Pros' tips

Janet Fletcher, cookbook author, Napa, California: "Our Viking range has a convection fan in the oven. I turn it on when roasting chicken or when baking potatoes. It speeds up the cooking and, I think, gives a crisper skin in both cases."

Robert Jörin, baking instructor, Culinary Institute of America, Napa, California: "While I haven't worked with home convection ovens, our professional convection oven is ideal for laminated doughs. These doughs tend to puff up higher than in regular ovens, but they can burn more easily, too, if you overbake."

Kathleen Weber, owner, Della Fattoria bakery, Petaluma, California: "We like the convection oven for speed and even browning. The one tip I have is to really watch the timing. Things will cook faster so you need to stay right there and watch the first batch of cookies you bake and note how long they take so you can adjust the time on your recipe."

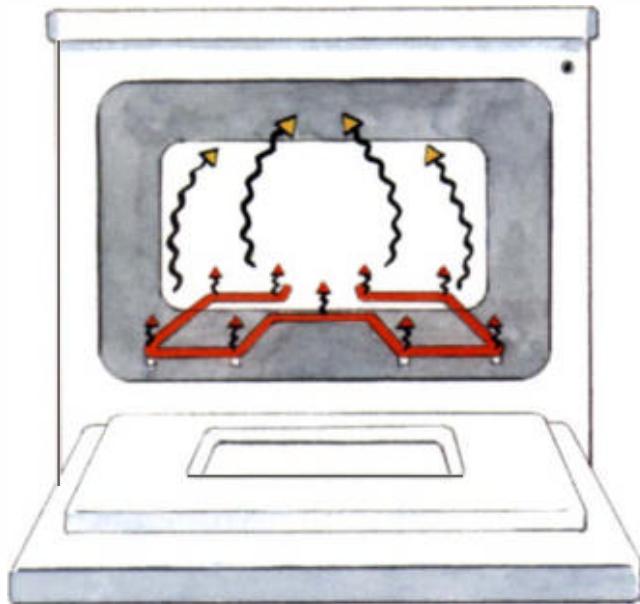
Shirley O. Corriher, food scientist, Atlanta: "I think you can't bake anything as well without convection. I just love it for biscuits especially. I get more volume with my bread, and it's ideal for cookies. I do find that while I get more even results, I still need to rotate the sheet pans during cooking. I also love convection for roasting meats."

enters the oven cavity. In many ovens, the third heating element is covered by a baffle, or a panel, which channels air sucked in by the fan past the heating element and back out into the oven (see center the diagram above).

The appliance industry generally calls this type of oven "true convection," "third-element convec-

David Lebovitz, baker and cookbook author, San Francisco: "I love my convection oven for multiple racks of cookies, or anything I want to dry out, like *pâte à choux*. I just don't use it for angel food cake or anything that's going to fly around."

Joanne Chang, baker, Mistral, Boston: "I use a convection oven for practically everything at the restaurant. I love the even heat. If I had to pick, I'd use convection over a standard oven any old day. I use convection to quickly and evenly toast nuts, to make evenly cooked tuiles to garnish desserts, to bake our brioche and raisin-pecan bread, tart shells and filled tarts, cakes, cookies, and breakfast treats."



A conventional oven cooks food primarily by heat radiating from the bottom heating element and from the hot surfaces of the "preheated" oven.

all over, rather than just on top (roasting the turkey on a rack in a low-sided baking dish or on a rimmed baking sheet helps to encourage this). It will also be done much more quickly.

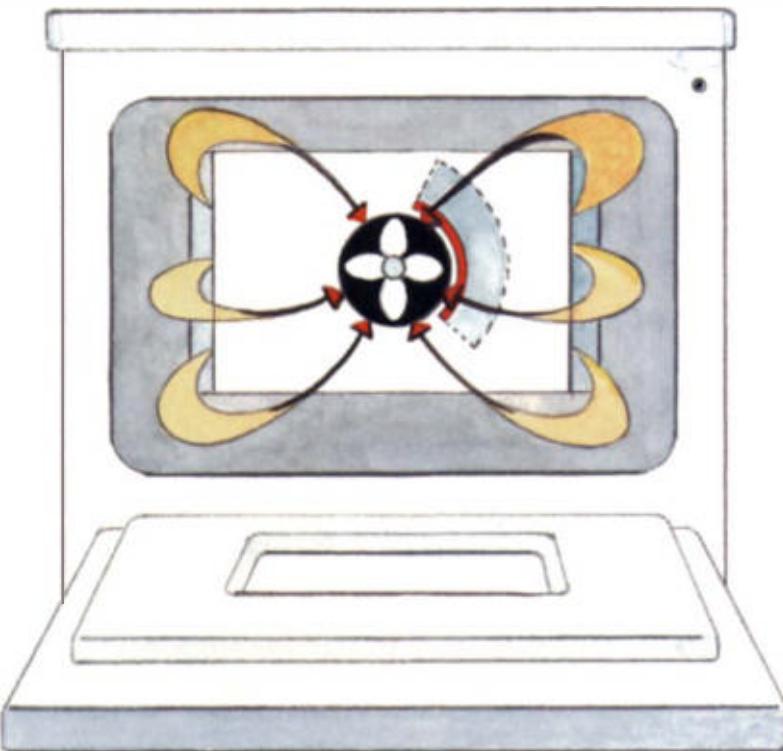
Not all convection ovens are "true convection"

The extent to which you get these marvelous results depends a lot on the particular convection oven you're using. The best—and most efficient—convection ovens blow heated air into the oven cavity. This means they have a third heating element (in addition to the usual top and bottom elements in a radiant oven) located near or around the fan in the back of the oven. This element heats the air to a uniform temperature before it

tion," or "European convection" (first popularized in Europe), so these are the terms to look for when shopping. In an effort to distinguish themselves, however, some manufacturers have come up with their own names. Dacor, for instance, calls its technology "Pure Convection" because its third-element convection also uses a special filtering system that prevents odors from being transferred from one item to another cooking in the same oven.

Convection ovens without a third heating element generally cook less evenly. In the worst examples, this type of oven will have a fan mounted on the outside of the oven and will actually blow unheated air into the oven cavity, randomly mixing up hot and cold air. In most of these ovens, though, the fan is mounted on the inside of the oven cavity, but the air blowing around the food won't be a uniform temperature. With the bottom radiant element fully heated, the oven will have hot and cool spots.

You'll find most "true convection" ovens in built-in wall ovens or slide-in ranges, not countertop models. If you're looking for the benefits of convection cooking, you should really upgrade your range or wall ovens rather than buy a countertop convection oven. Full-size ovens generally have better circulation and ventilation, and they may

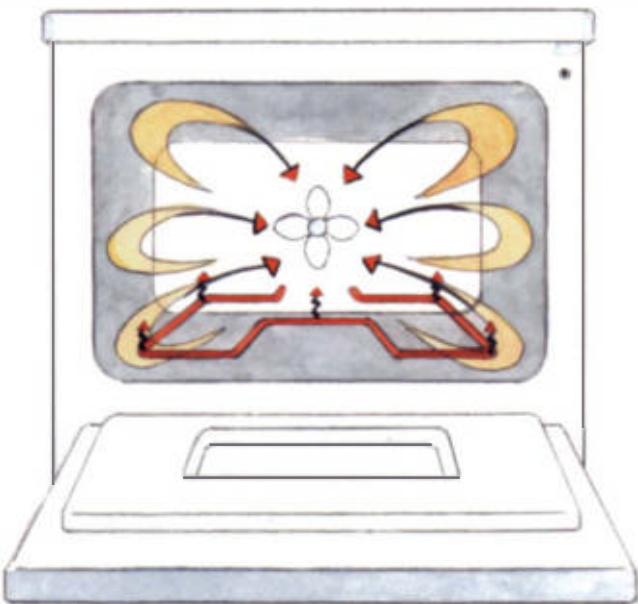


A "true convection" oven heats food by direct heat transfer from hot air that's circulated by a fan and heated by a third element concealed behind a baffle or double wall in the back of the oven. The fan pulls air from the oven cavity, past the third heating element, and blows it back into the oven.

include a filtering system. They're usually self-cleaning, too. If, however, you're short on space and looking for extra oven capacity, a countertop convection oven might be right for you. Some of the better models do have heating elements integrated with the fan (see the sidebar on p. 72).

Finding a "true convection" oven

If you've had convection in your home oven in the past, you might have been underimpressed with it. Just in the last few years, manufacturers have really caught the "true convection" bug, and home ovens are much better for it. Now there are so many ovens with convection features on the market that I couldn't begin to name them all. I do know that Amana, Dacor, GE, Gaggenau, Frigidaire, Kenmore, Miele, KitchenAid, Thermador, and Viking all manufacture electric, self-cleaning ovens that feature third-element convection. Each manufacturer has many different models of oven, though, so you must inquire carefully to make sure the oven you're eyeing has the goods. If you've got your heart set on a professional range, you might have to give up true convection, as many of these ranges didn't feature it until recently, and some still don't. Also, gas ovens generally don't offer true convection. (This doesn't



A radiant oven with a fan heats food by both radiant heat from the bottom element and direct heat transfer from air circulated by a fan (but not heated by a third element around the fan). This type of convection oven will not heat food as evenly as a "true" convection.

Guidelines for using convection

- When following a recipe designed for a conventional oven, heat the convection oven to a temperature 25°F lower than the recipe suggests.
- Expect food to be done in less time (as much as 25% less) than it would be in a conventional oven, even with the 25°F reduction. The longer you're cooking something, the greater the time savings; for instance, a turkey may cook an hour faster in a convection oven than in a regular oven, but you may only shave off a minute or two when baking cookies.
- Use baking pans with low sides to get the full benefits of convection.
- Go ahead and fill every rack in the oven, but still keep an eye on browning. Depending on your oven, you may have to rotate pans for even cooking.
- Most ovens let you turn convection on and off. Play around with it. If you want a well-browned roast that's also slowly cooked, turn the convection on at the start or at the end, but off during the rest of cooking.
- The fan sometimes blows parchment or foil around. Use a metal spoon or fork to hold down the parchment.



mean you can't have a gas cooktop; many manufacturers now offer "dual-fuel" ranges.)

Also, ovens are becoming so highly specialized that true convection is only the beginning. Most ovens are designed to let you turn convection on and off as you please. But some go further and allow you to use the convection element with just the broiler, or just the baking element, or with either of

these heated to a lesser or greater temperature. Gaggenau has an oven with nine cooking combinations. Other manufacturers, including Thermador and GE, offer ovens with a hidden radiant element in the bottom of the oven so you can cook pizza and breads directly on the heat source with the convection functioning, too. Or if you want a professional-style all-convection all-the-time oven, Wolf now offers one designed especially to be built into home kitchens. Every manufacturer has an angle.

To get familiar with the options, get on the Net (see Sources, p. 84, for web addresses and telephone numbers) and then head for an appliance store. Built-in or slide-in convection ovens and ranges start at about \$1,500.

Try pastries, pies, roasts, or vegetables in the convection oven

Once you decide what type of convection oven you're going to use, you can begin to think about what you'd like to cook in it. I first got excited about convection ovens when my mother started cooking in one 20 years ago. My father brought home one of the first Farberware countertop convection ovens, and my mother discovered it produced especially delicious roast chicken and roast potatoes. Later, when I began working in professional kitchens, I learned that a convection oven can cook a lot of things well. I began to rely on it for the tastiest, well-caramelized roasted vegetables. I cooked crisp tart crusts, juicy beef tenderloins, and even perfect frittatas in a convection oven. The pastry chefs I worked with used the convection oven to bake flaky croissants every morning.

When I began to research this topic, I was curious to know how other cooks felt about convection cooking and what tips they could offer. I discovered that many pros have had limited experience with home convection ovens but have used them in professional kitchens. Now that so many manufacturers are including true convection in home ovens (and

Pros' tips

Abigail Johnson Dodge, *Fine*

Cooking test kitchen director, Southport, Connecticut:

"I think it's important to remember that recipes aren't developed for convection ovens, so start by using the 25/25 rule (reduce the oven temperature by 25°F and reduce cooking time by 25%), and then expect to experiment a little. I've had great results with roasts and baked potatoes in a convection oven, and I've filled a convection oven full of shortcakes and had everyone bake perfectly. I also discovered one day while doing a cooking demonstration that you can bake a fabulous custard pie in a convection oven. I just wouldn't use convection for delicate things, like ladyfingers or meringues, because the fan might blow them around."

Craig Ponsford, owner, Artisan

Bakers, Sonoma, California:

"I prefer to bake our bread in our very hot bottom-heated deck ovens, but we do use convection ovens for all our laminated pastries. We bake really terrific croissants and Danish with convection."



Countertop cooking

When shopping for a countertop convection oven, look for the biggest oven capacity you can find. (Anything that also functions as a toaster oven really isn't big enough to give you the full benefits of convection cooking.) You'll recognize the better models by their price—\$300 to \$700. Bigger countertop convection ovens are about 18 to 22 inches wide and 14 to 18 inches deep. Be sure you have enough counter space: these ovens get fairly hot and need a few inches of breathing room around them.

They also vent directly into your kitchen, so you might have lingering odors after cooking a roast. Check to see if the oven has an easy-to-clean interior.

You'll also see microwave/convection ovens on the market. These are primarily designed as microwave ovens; some can function as convection ovens alone, but most supplement convection with microwaves.

A large countertop convection oven, such as the DeLonghi pictured above, produces excellent results, including extra-crispy roast potatoes and juicy, golden roast chicken in 20% to 25% less time than the same food cooked in a radiant oven. It's just big enough to hold the smallest of turkeys. A baffle around the fan in this oven promotes good air circulation.

For countertop convection oven sources, see p. 84.

many chefs are upgrading their home kitchens), this will probably change. Nevertheless, I did get some valuable advice and interesting opinions, which I hope will help you in considering convection for your kitchen. The results of my informal poll are in the sidebars starting on p. 68.

Susie Middleton is an associate editor for *Fine Cooking*. ♦

Chiffon Cake

Makes a Comeback

The cake's lofty height comes from whipped egg whites, its moist and tender crumb from vegetable oil

BY ELINOR KLIVANS

A chiffon cake is what angel food cake wants to be when it grows up. A little taller, a little prettier, and a lot sexier. Like angel food cake, it gets its height and airy texture from whipped egg whites. But that's where comparisons end. Chiffon cakes also boast richness and an almost unbelievable tenderness. They're not as sweet as angel food and can come in all kinds of flavors, including the classic orange version that made its debut at Hollywood parties in the 1940s. And while pure-white angel food cake would seem inappropriate iced or lavishly garnished (think of lipstick on a child), its more worldly sister looks comfortably stylish covered in pink frosting or candied almonds.

If you haven't guessed it already, I love these cakes. On top of how impressive they look and taste, they're a pleasure to make, especially when you're combining voluminous whipped egg whites with a whipped egg-yolk mixture that already includes the flour. Folding these two fluffy batters together makes me think of what it must be like to mix clouds together. The lightness, the lovely pale color, even the *fffft, ffffft, ffffft* sound you hear as you fold are all very soothing.



Full-flavored chiffon cakes take well to icings.
Here, Elinor Klivans drizzles a glaze over the chocolate chip and almond cake pictured below.





A fluffy batter makes a high-rise cake. Lemon chiffon cake—a classic flavor—is topped with a creamy and not-too-sweet raspberry frosting.

An amazing tenderness from oil

Other sponge-style cakes include egg yolks and may even include a fat, such as the melted butter in a *génoise*. What distinguishes chiffon cakes, and what gives them their soft, moist texture, is the addition of vegetable oil, which tenderizes and moistens the crumb. The oil gets beaten (along with the egg yolks and flavorings) with the flour. The fat coats the flour proteins, thereby reducing their ability to form gluten. The less gluten, the more tender the cake.

I generally use a colorless and mostly flavorless oil; canola, safflower, corn, and grapeseed oil all work well. Just be sure to smell and taste the oil before you use it; even plain vegetable oil can develop an off flavor that may come through in the cake. You may also want to experiment with olive and nut oils, which would add their own subtle flavor as well.

A stately stature from egg whites

Although these cakes contain a little bit of chemical leavening, their impressive height is owed to the leavening powers of whipped eggs, especially to properly whisked egg whites.

Underwhipped is better than overwhipped. When beating whites, it's important to whip them to

A glamorous debut for a glamorous cake

Chiffon cake is a relatively new kind of cake, at about 60 years old. It was invented by Harry Baker, an insurance salesman who also baked for private Hollywood parties. His orange-flavored version combined the lightness of an angel food cake with the moist richness of a butter cake. The secret, which was revealed when Baker sold the recipe to General Mills in 1947, is simple yet clever. He had combined the whipped egg whites of an angel food cake with the whisked yolks of a sponge cake and enriched the batter with oil.

the correct stage. As whites whip, their color changes from very pale yellow to white. Properly beaten whites will look smooth, wet, and shiny and will form soft peaks (see the photos on p. 76). If in doubt, it's preferable to underbeat whites slightly than to overbeat them. Overbeaten whites look lumpy and dull and form big white clumps when you fold them into another mixture. Because their air bubbles are overworked, they're more likely to collapse in the oven, resulting in a cake that's more chewy than tender.

Here are more tips for whipping egg whites:

- ◆ Let the whites warm up a bit before whipping; you'll get best results when they're about 60°F.
- ◆ Whip the whites in a clean, deep, stainless-steel or copper bowl. Even the slightest bit of fat will inhibit the whites' ability to trap air. Wipe the beater and the bowl with a paper towel moistened with a bit of white vinegar and remove even the tiniest speck of yolk with a piece of egg shell.
- ◆ Begin whipping the whites on medium-low speed until frothy and then increase the speed.
- ◆ Add sugar, which helps stabilize the whites, just as the whites reach the soft-peak stage; add it slowly so that the egg whites have time to absorb it.

Egg yolks are more forgiving. You can breathe easier when whipping the egg yolks, which are almost impossible to overwhip. Beat the yolk mixture until a smooth, fluffy batter develops, a solid three minutes at the least.

Think gentle when combining the two batters

Now that you've spent all this time incorporating air into your cake, you need to mix the two batters together with the lightest touch possible. I find it helps to stir about one-third of the beaten egg-white mixture into the beaten yolk mixture to lighten it to a more similar consistency. Then, using a large rubber spatula, fold in the remaining egg whites, digging down to the bottom of the bowl with the spatula and bringing the two mixtures up and over

each other. Turn the bowl as you fold so that the mixtures blend quickly, and fold just to the point that no white streaks remain.

This cake should stick to the pan. Chiffon cakes bake in a large tube pan that doesn't get greased. (Tube pans have a smooth bottom rather than the patterned bottom of a bundt pan.) As the batter bakes, it climbs slowly up the sides and stays put.

I once absentmindedly greased a tube pan for a chiffon cake. It rose quickly and was unusually high. I thought: "Aha! Here's another food myth disproved!" But as soon as the cake came out of the oven it collapsed in a heap. The greased sides couldn't support the weight of the batter, and all that had been under the top crust was a big air bubble.

Cool the cake with the center of the tube pan inverted onto a bottle. This allows air to circulate around the cake and keeps the weight of the cake from pushing down on itself as it cools. Just be sure that you bake the cake fully; if the interior is underbaked, the weight of it may pull the cake out of the pan. A short bottle or an inverted funnel will keep any damage from a premature fall to a minimum.

The cooled cake can be a challenge to remove from the pan. If it doesn't come out after inverting it and giving it a gentle tap, run a long, thin knife around the cake as close to the side of the pan as possible. To cut smooth, even slices without crushing the cake, use a serrated knife and a sawing motion.

You can serve this kind of cake with pride for at least three days. An unfrosted and ungarnished cake will also freeze beautifully.

RECIPES

Lemon Chiffon Cake with Raspberry Cream

Use the whipped cream to frost the whole cake or to garnish individual slices of cake. Serves twelve to fourteen.

FOR THE CAKE:

9 oz. (2 1/4 cups) cake flour
1 1/2 cups sugar
1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 cup canola or corn oil
7 large eggs, separated
1/2 cup water
1/3 cup fresh lemon juice
1 1/2 tsp. grated lemon zest
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
Pinch cream of tartar

FOR THE WHIPPED CREAM:

2 cups whipping cream
6 Tbs. unsweetened seedless raspberry purée (from about 1 cup raspberries; frozen is fine)
6 Tbs. confectioners' sugar
1 tsp. vanilla extract
Fresh raspberries (optional)



Oil is the secret ingredient that makes chiffon cakes so tender. Be sure to test it for freshness before using.



Egg yolks make a batter that's smooth and thick and a cake that's rich and delicious.



Ample lemon zest intensifies the lemon flavor of this cake. It adds a little texture as well.

To prepare the cake—Heat the oven to 325°F. Have ready a 9 1/2- or 10-inch tube pan with sides at least 3 3/4 inches high.

In a large bowl, sift together the cake flour, 1 cup of the sugar, the baking powder, and the salt. Make a well in the center of the flour mixture and put in the oil, egg yolks, water, lemon juice, lemon zest, and vanilla extract. Beat the mixture on medium speed until smooth and thick, at least 3 min. Set aside.

In a large, clean bowl with clean beaters or a whisk attachment, whisk the egg whites and the cream of tartar on medium speed until the cream of tartar is dissolved and the whites are foamy. Increase the speed to high and beat the whites until the movement of the beaters forms lines in the mixture. Slowly pour in the remaining 1/2 cup sugar, about 2 Tbs. at a time, and beat the mixture until soft peaks form.

With a large rubber spatula, stir about one-third of the egg whites into the yolk mixture. Gently fold in

Evaluating egg whites



Underwhipped. These egg whites are just beginning to hold a peak and still look quite wet. This is the right time to slowly add the sugar.



Perfectly whipped. These whites hold a definite shape but are still smooth and soft.



Overwhipped. These clumpy whites will be harder to mix and will result in a shorter, denser cake.



Use a large bowl when folding the two airy batters together. Forcing the batter into a smaller one would cause the batter to deflate.

the remaining egg whites until no white streaks remain. Pour the batter into the tube pan, spreading it evenly. Bake until you can gently press your fingers on top of the cake and it feels firm, about 1 hour and 10 min. Any cracks that form on the top should look dry.

Invert the pan onto a bottle with a narrow neck and cool thoroughly, about an hour and a half. Use a small, sharp knife to loosen the cake from the sides of the pan and the center of the tube, if necessary. Remove the cake from the pan and slide it onto a serving plate.

To make the topping—In a large bowl, beat the whipping cream, raspberry purée, confectioners' sugar, and vanilla extract until soft peaks form. Spread the whipped cream over the cooled cake. Garnish with fresh berries, if you like.

Almond Crunch & Chocolate Confetti Chiffon Cake

The sweet coating on the baked almonds keeps its crunch for several days. *Serves twelve to fourteen.*

FOR THE ALMOND CRUNCH TOPPING:

1 large egg white
1 1/4 cups sliced almonds
2 Tbs. sugar

FOR THE CAKE:

10 oz. (1 1/2 cups) miniature semisweet chocolate chips
9 oz. (2 1/4 cups) cake flour
1 1/2 cups sugar
1 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 cup canola or corn oil
7 large eggs, separated
2/3 cup water
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1/2 to 1 tsp. pure almond extract
2 Tbs. almond-flavored liqueur, such as Amaretto (optional)
1/4 tsp. cream of tartar

FOR THE GLAZE:

1 1/2 cups confectioners' sugar
3 to 4 Tbs. milk
1/2 tsp. pure almond extract (optional)

To prepare the almond crunch topping—Heat the oven to 325°F. Have ready an ungreased nonstick baking sheet. In a medium bowl, whisk the egg white with a fork until foamy, about 30 seconds. Stir in the nuts until they're evenly coated. Sprinkle the sugar over the nuts and stir the mixture. Spread the nuts in a single layer onto the baking sheet. Bake for 5 min. Stir the nuts with a wooden spoon to loosen them from the baking sheet. Bake until golden, another 5 to 8 min. Remove the nuts from the oven and immediately stir them to loosen them from the baking sheet. The nuts will become crisp as they cool. Set aside.

To prepare the cake—Heat the oven to 325°F. Have ready a 9 1/2- or 10-inch tube pan with sides at least 3 3/4 inches high.

In a food processor, pulse the chocolate chips until some of them are finely grated and the rest have formed small crumbs.

In a large bowl, sift together the cake flour, 1 cup of the sugar, the baking powder, and the salt. Make a well in the center and put in the oil, egg yolks, water, vanilla, almond extract, and Amaretto. Beat the mixture on medium speed until smooth and thick, at least 3 min. Fold in the reserved chocolate chips. Set aside.

In a large, clean bowl with clean beaters or a whisk attachment, whisk the egg whites and the cream of tartar on medium speed until the cream of tartar is dissolved and the whites are foamy. Increase the speed to high and beat the whites until the movement of the beaters forms lines in the mixture. Slowly pour in the remaining 1/2 cup sugar, about 2 Tbs. at a time, and beat the mixture until soft peaks form.

With a large rubber spatula, stir about one-third of the egg whites into the yolk mixture. Gently fold in the remaining egg whites until no white streaks remain. Pour the batter into the tube pan, spreading it evenly. Bake until you can gently press your fingers on top of the cake and it feels firm, about 1 hour and 10 min. Any cracks that form on the top should look dry.

Invert the pan onto a bottle with a narrow neck and cool thoroughly, about an hour and a half. Use a small, sharp knife to loosen the cake from the sides of the pan and the center of the tube, if necessary. Remove the cake from the pan and slide it onto a serving plate.

To make the glaze—In a small bowl, stir together the confectioners' sugar, milk, and almond extract, adding enough milk to make a smooth glaze with a thick, syrupy consistency. Set aside 2 Tbs. of the glaze. Spread the remaining glaze over the top of the cake, letting it drip down the sides of the cake and into the center hole; you may not need to use all of it. Cover the top of the cake with the prepared almonds. Drizzle the reserved glaze over the almonds.

Cinnamon Chiffon Cake

Though plain looking, this cake packs a ton of flavor. Serves twelve to fourteen.

9 oz. (2 1/4 cups) cake flour
1 1/2 cups sugar
1 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. salt
4 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/2 cup canola or corn oil
7 large eggs, separated
3/4 cup water
2 tsp. vanilla extract
Pinch of cream of tartar
2 Tbs. confectioners' sugar mixed with 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon for dusting

Heat the oven to 325°F. Have ready a 9 1/2- or 10-inch tube pan with sides at least 3 3/4 inches high.

In a large bowl, sift together the cake flour, 1 cup of the sugar, the baking powder, salt, and cinnamon. Make a well in the center and put in the oil, egg yolks, water, and vanilla. Beat the mixture on medium speed until smooth and thick and it turns a light tan color, at least 3 min. Set aside.

In a large, clean bowl with clean beaters or a whisk attachment, whisk the egg whites and the cream of tartar on medium speed until the cream of tartar is dissolved and the whites are foamy. Increase the speed to high and beat the whites until the movement of the beaters forms lines in the mixture. Slowly pour in the remaining 1/2 cup sugar, about 2 Tbs. at a time, and beat the mixture until soft peaks form.

With a large rubber spatula, stir about one-third of the egg whites into the yolk mixture. Gently fold in the remaining egg whites until no white streaks remain. Pour the batter into the tube pan, spreading it evenly. Bake until you can gently press your fingers on top of the cake and it feels firm, about 1 hour and 10 min. Any cracks that form on the top should look dry.

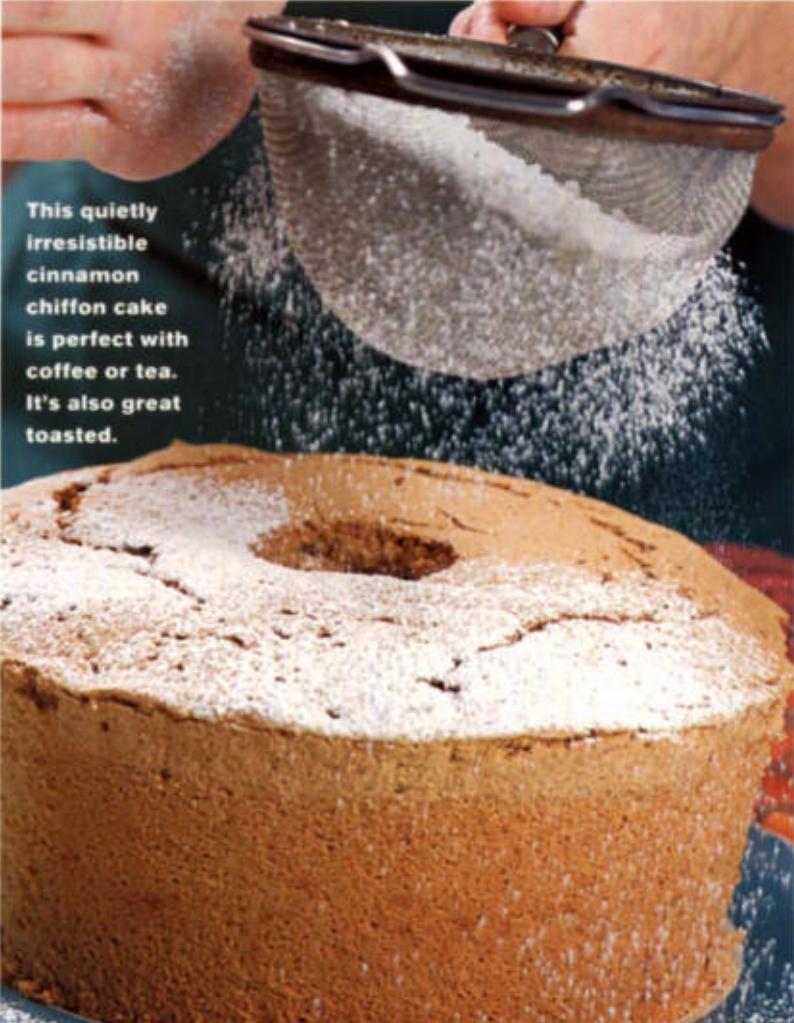
Invert the pan onto a bottle with a narrow neck and cool thoroughly, about an hour. Use a small, sharp knife to loosen the cake from the sides of the pan and the center of the tube, if necessary. Remove the cake from the pan and slide it onto a serving plate. Sprinkle the top with the confectioners' sugar and cinnamon mixture.

SPICE CAKE VARIATION: Replace the 4 tsp. ground cinnamon with a mix of 2 tsp. ground cinnamon, 1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg, and 1/4 tsp. ground cloves.

*Elinor Klivans is a baker, writer, and cooking instructor. Her books include *Bake & Freeze Desserts*, *Bake & Freeze Chocolate Desserts (Broadway)*, and *125 Cookies to Bake, Nibble & Savor (Bantam)*. ♦*



Flip and cool.
Let the cake cool upside down on a bottle so it won't collapse under its own weight.



Choosing flour for baking

A stroll down the supermarket's baking aisle reminds me that there are more than a few kinds of flour to choose from. To decide which type is best for the kind of baking you do, it helps to understand that flour is made up of carbohydrates (or starch), proteins, and in the case of whole-wheat flour, a bit of fat. Of these three nutrients, protein matters most to the baker. The proteins in wheat are called gluten-forming proteins, and the quantity and quality of these proteins determines how a flour will perform in the kitchen.

A high percentage of protein means a harder (stronger) flour best suited to chewy, crusty breads and other yeast-risen products. Less protein means a softer flour, best for tender and chemically leavened baked goods, like pie crusts, cakes, cookies, and biscuits.

Since the protein content of wheat can range from 5% to 15%, the flour industry has established labeling standards that help us find the right flour for our needs (see the chart at right.)

Unless you're an avid bread or cake baker, an all-purpose flour is probably your best choice. It's made with an average protein content to be versatile enough for everything from cakes to breads. In general, you may find that cakes made with all-purpose flour are a bit tougher and less delicate than those made with a softer pastry or cake flour. Likewise, breads made with all-purpose flour may be a bit softer and flatter than those made with bread flour. But overall, these differences should be slight for the casual baker.

If a recipe calls for a certain type of flour and all you have is all-purpose, some manufacturers recommend using 1 tablespoon more per cup when making breads and 1 tablespoon less per cup for cookies and biscuits. This will increase

"Hard" flours, including bread and whole-wheat flours, range in protein from 12% to 15%. Bread flour is specially formulated to enhance gluten elasticity. Whole-wheat flour, however, despite its high protein, will produce a dense loaf unless mixed with all-purpose flour.



All-purpose flours have a protein range between 9% and 12%. King Arthur flour has a protein content of 11.7%, while Pillsbury and Gold Medal are both 10.5%



Flours with a low protein content include Softasilk cake flour and White Lily all-purpose flour (which is made from a softer wheat, making it lower in protein than most all-purpose brands; White Lily is often referred to as a pastry flour, even though it's labeled all-purpose). Self-rising flour, which has leavening added to it, ranges from 9% to 11% protein.

HOW MUCH PROTEIN IS IN YOUR FLOUR?

flour type	% protein	recommended uses
high-gluten	14 to 15	bagels, pizza crusts, blending with other flours
whole-wheat	14	hearth breads, blending with other flours
bread	12 to 13	traditional breads, bread machine breads, pizza crusts
all-purpose	9 to 12	everyday cooking, quick breads, pastries
self-rising	9 to 11	biscuits, quick breads, cookies
pastry	8 to 9	pie crusts, pastries, cookies, biscuits
cake	5 to 8	cakes, especially those with a high ratio of sugar to flour

or decrease the total amount of protein going into the batter or dough.

Within categories of flour, there's also a range in amount of protein between different brands (for example, see the all-purpose flours in the photo above). It's also important to know that, despite its high protein content, whole-wheat

flour has to be mixed with all-purpose flour to form a light loaf (the bran in whole-wheat flour tends to cut gluten strands, reducing elasticity).

Beyond the differences in protein content, there are also a few distinct specialty flours. Cake flour, the lowest protein flour, has undergone a special bleaching process (distinct from the process used for other white flours) that increases the flour's ability to hold water and sugar. This means that when you're making baked goods with a high ratio of sugar to flour, the flour will be better able to hold its rise and will be less likely to collapse.

Self-rising flour is a relatively soft all-purpose flour to which baking powder and salt have been added. Manufacturers suggest using it for biscuits, quick breads, and cookies and eliminating the baking powder and salt called for in the recipe.

For a smooth finish, apply a crumb coat before you frost a cake

If you've ever marveled at the flawless frosting on a professionally made cake and wondered why your frosted cakes often end up speckled with crumbs, here's a tip: Apply a "crumb coat" to your cake before you spread on the actual frosting. If you use a little bit of frosting to seal the cake's surface and secure loose crumbs, your final layer of frosting will go on much more smoothly.

Begin by brushing off any loose crumbs on the cake with a dry pastry brush or your fingers. (If you're making a layer cake, the layers should already be filled and stacked.) Then spread a very thin layer of frosting over the entire sur-

face of the cake. With lighter frostings, this layer may be transparent. Don't worry: its role is simply to seal the surface. Fill in any cracks or divots in the cake.

After smoothing the surface of the crumb coat (don't worry if it's speckled with crumbs), refrigerate the cake for 5 to 10 minutes to let the frosting set. Before finishing the cake, clean the spatula, the rim of the mixing bowl, and the entire work area of any crumbs, which have an almost magnetic way of getting into the frosting. Now you're ready to spread a smooth, crumb-free frosting onto the cake.



The simplest choice for a crumb coat is a bit of the actual frosting. Depending on the size of your cake and the amount of patching up you need to do, a crumb coat should take about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of frosting. I've found that I don't need to make extra frosting, since I wind up needing less for the final layer.

As an alternative to frosting, strained preserves also make a fine crumb coat. The sleek, translucent coating that this creates is especially

useful if you're planning to finish the cake with a warm chocolate glaze. Melt $\frac{1}{2}$ cup jelly, jam, or preserves with 1 tablespoon water until thin and smooth. Strain the warmed mixture into a small bowl and brush a thin layer onto the cake to seal the surface. Let it sit for 5 to 10 minutes to set up before applying the finish frosting. It should be somewhat tacky.

Molly Stevens is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking. ♦

Condensed milk vs. evaporated milk

Until recently, I'd never given canned milk much thought. But last summer, I was following a new recipe for potato salad that called for evaporated milk, and I mistakenly used condensed milk. Having ruined the salad, I decided it was time to figure out what was what.

Both evaporated and condensed milk begin as fresh milk. The milk undergoes a vacuum process that evaporates over half the volume of water and concentrates the nutritive part of the milk. Evaporated milk is then poured into cans that are heat-sterilized to prevent spoilage. The ultra-high temperatures of sterilization cause the milk sugars to caramelize and give evaporated milk its characteristic cooked taste. In the end, evaporated milk has the consistency of light cream and a tint that ranges from ivory to pale amber.



Condensed milk is basically evaporated milk with a lot of sugar added (up to $2\frac{1}{3}$ cups per 14-ounce can) before it's canned. The result is a thick, gooey, and intensely sweet product. Since large amounts of sugar prevent bacterial growth, condensed milk doesn't need to be heat-sterilized and has a less caramelized flavor than evaporated milk.

Despite their similar packaging and nomenclature, evaporated and condensed milk are not interchangeable. Evaporated milk can be reconstituted with an equal volume of water and used to replace fresh milk in most recipes.

According to food scientist Shirley Corriher, undiluted evaporated milk is good in sweet bread doughs because of its high concentration of lactose, or milk sugars. Apparently yeast don't like lactose, which means that a greater amount of residual sugars (unconverted by yeast activity) remains in the final bread, and the loaf is sweeter.

Due to its high sugar content, the primary use for condensed milk is in sweets. Bakers find it especially useful in candy and fudge since the sugar has already been boiled down into a syrup, meaning fewer problems with crystallization. Condensed milk is also often used to give some bar cookies their characteristically gooey consistency. When beaten with an acid, such as lemon juice, condensed milk develops the consistency of soft cream cheese, and this mixture is sometimes used for making cheesecakes and pies.

Explore Cumin's Full Character

Most of my favorite spices begin with the letter C: cardamom, cayenne, cinnamon, cloves, coriander, cumin. I was born in India, so all of these were familiar to me by an early age. But where I had to grow up a little to appreciate the subtleties of cardamom and coriander, cumin was an instant and enduring hit.

Impossible to say why I like it—its deep, satisfying, savory quality, its nutty crunch when toasted. And it's equally impossible to say definitively what it tastes like. Cumin is one of those primary tastes. It's been unflatteringly compared to bedbugs and sweat. Some call it earthy, bitter, pungent, but that can be said about a lot of spices. The only way to understand cumin is simply to taste it in its various forms.

Toast, fry, and grind to discover its full character

Here's how to explore cumin's range, tasting as you go:

Have on hand some whole seeds as well as some pur-

chased already ground. Chew on a few raw seeds. Appreciate their texture as well as their flavor. (If you want a platform for tasting the spice, try slices of lightly salted boiled potato or a little dish of plain yogurt with a bit of salt.)

Next, pound a few raw seeds coarsely in a mortar and pestle and take a taste. Pulverize some in a grinder and do the same. Finally, take a sniff and taste of commercially powdered cumin to see the difference.

To the next level: Toast a few seeds in a hot, dry skillet, without any oil. Let cool a bit and taste. Now pound these toasted seeds and taste again. The last step is to heat a teaspoon of oil in a small skillet, throw in a few seeds. When they begin to sputter, lift them out of the oil—don't let them burn or they'll taste bitter—let cool, and taste again.

The goal is that after all of this tasting, you'll come to see that every aspect of cumin



Ground cumin seeds quickly lose their flavor. Buy whole seeds instead.

has its charms. In fact, in Indian cooking, cumin is used raw, toasted, and fried—often in the same recipe.

A worldly spice

If I talk about cumin in an Indian-centric way, it's more about my history than cumin's, for the spice is an international star.

Cumin was used in ancient Egypt and the lands around the Mediterranean. From there it spread eastward, where it met an especially enthusiastic welcome in India, and westward through North Africa and Europe to the New World, where it got an equally happy reception.

You'll find cumin in the spice section of your supermarket. You should be able to find it packaged or in bulk in

any Indian, Middle Eastern, or Hispanic grocery. If you buy in bulk, buy only as much as you can use in a relatively short time, and buy from places that have a fast turnover. And unless you're in a very lazy mood, buy only whole seeds and store them in a closed jar. It's easy to pulverize just what you need in a mortar and pestle or in a little coffee grinder dedicated to spices, and the difference in flavor is enormous.

Using cumin

You'll find recipes using cumin in the cuisines of India, Latin America, North Africa,



Grind whole cumin seeds yourself to get the best flavor.



For a deeper, nuttier flavor, toast the seeds for a few minutes in a hot, dry pan.



Fry the seeds for yet another flavor dimension. Be careful: they burn quickly.

Experiment with cumin

- ◆ Before roasting a chicken or ears of corn, rub with a mix of pounded raw cumin seeds, soft butter, some crushed garlic, and a pinch of cayenne.
- ◆ Add an earthy flavor to plain rice by adding some raw cumin along with the salt and water. Or sizzle some seeds along with some chopped onion in butter or oil and proceed as you would for a rice pilaf.
- ◆ Sprinkle coarsely ground toasted cumin seeds over boiled or roasted potatoes, along with cayenne and salt.
- ◆ Transform a simple dip of cucumbers and yogurt by adding some toasted, ground cumin.
- ◆ Sizzle whole cumin seeds along with a clove or two of chopped garlic and add this at the last minute to lentil soup.
- ◆ Season a sofrito—the sautéed mixture of chopped onions, green peppers, and garlic—for black beans generously with cumin.
- ◆ Add whole raw or toasted cumin seeds to cornbread or cheese straws.

the Middle East, and occasionally Spain and Portugal.

Cumin stands on its own very well, but it also has a great affinity to garlic and pepper (black or chile), and it's traditionally paired with coriander in Indian cooking. Cumin is a key player in curry powder and often appears in another Indian spice mixture called *garam masala*. It is an essential component in Tex-Mex chili powder, as well as in Moroccan and other Middle Eastern spice blends.

Cumin is good with practically everything in the savory realm; it perks up meat, vegetables, and dairy dishes without heat. Another plus: when you eat cumin, you're doing your digestion a good turn.

A final note: Recipes sometimes distinguish between white and black cumin. "White" cumin is our friend *Cuminum cyminum*; black cumin is a terminological muddle. It's often erroneously used to describe *nigella* seeds, an entirely different species with an entirely different flavor. *Kala zeera*, true Indian black cumin, is a dustily fragrant relative of caraway native to India and the trans-Himalayan regions, with specialized uses in North Indian meat and vegetable dishes. But that's another story.

Anthropologist Niloufer King researches, teaches, and writes on tropical food plants and cuisines. ♦

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How fragile egg-white foams are transformed into firm, airy meringues

For a confection with so few ingredients—just egg whites, sugar, and perhaps a pinch of acid like cream of tartar—meringues are surprisingly versatile and complex creatures. They can be hard, crisp shells (like vacherins) or cake layers (like dacquoise), or they can be soft, cloud-like toppings for pies and tarts. Meringues can also be troublemakers. They can weep, they can bead, and they can be too soft. As any pastry chef knows, making a light, stable egg-white foam—the basic component of a meringue—is no simple matter.

Beaten egg whites whipped with sugar

A meringue is simply a mixture of beaten egg whites whipped with sugar until the volume increases and peaks form. Egg whites have a superb capacity to foam; as long as certain precautions are taken (see the sidebar opposite), they can increase in volume by up to eight times.

The first step in making meringue—beating air into egg whites—causes one of the egg-white proteins (conalbumin) to unwind, or denature. The unwound proteins link loosely together around the air bubbles, establishing a foam.

The key during this initial step is to beat the egg whites just until the proteins are loosely linked, which a pastry chef recognizes as the soft-peak stage. These loosely linked proteins allow the air bubbles to expand when they're heated so the soft meringue can rise until heat sets all the proteins.

If the egg-white foam is overbeaten, however, the protein bonds will tighten and the foam sets even before it gets heated. Then, when it is heated, the foam won't puff at all in the oven. If the beaten egg whites start to look at all dry, hard, or lumpy (as do the whites in the photo at right), then they're probably overbeaten.

The right amount of sugar stabilizes the egg foam

Sugar is a vital part of meringues. Besides adding sweetness, sugar helps stabilize the meringue's structure. When sugar is beaten into an egg-white foam, it dissolves in the protein film on the surface of the air bubbles. This sugary syrup film prevents the proteins from drying out and tightening up too fast.

Once you add sugar, you can beat the egg whites without worrying too much about their getting lumpy or overbeaten. But at the same time,



Sugar guards against overbeaten egg whites. The whites above and below were both beaten for three minutes, but sugar was added to the smooth, firm egg whites above. The lumpy, overbeaten whites below were whipped without sugar.



sugar dramatically increases the beating time required to get good volume. Pastry chefs deal with this double-edged sword in different ways: some chefs add sugar to the whites in the beginning, turn the mixer on, and walk away, but most prefer to get some volume and structure in the whites first, and then start adding the sugar.

The proportion of sugar to whites determines the meringue's texture. When you beat sugar into egg whites, the sugar draws the water out of the whites. Then, when the meringue is heated (either in the oven or by pouring in a boiling sugar syrup), the heat evaporates the water from the sugar-syrup-encased air bubbles,

Everything matters when making meringues

CONDITION OF THE EGGS

Room-temperature whites whip faster than cold whites. Old egg whites whip faster, and to a slightly greater volume, but fresh whites make a more stable foam that holds up better during cooking.

PURE WHITES

Fats destroy egg-white foams, and egg yolks and olive oil are two of the most destructive. One tiny smidge of yolk in the whites, or of grease on the beaters or bowl, can give you a thick, gray mess rather than a light, stable foam.

TYPE OF SUGAR

For soft meringues, superfine sugar (also called bar or castor sugar) is preferable because it dissolves faster. For hard meringues, confectioners' sugar will give a lighter result.

TYPE OF BOWL

A copper bowl is best, a plastic bowl is worst. Beating whites in a copper bowl seems to help increase the volume during baking. Avoid plastic, which is difficult to rid of trace amounts of fat.

TYPE OF WHISK

For hand beating, use a balloon whisk with many tines—more tines incorporate more air faster. For an electric hand mixer, be sure to move the beaters around in the bowl.

HOW LONG TO BEAT

Beat the whites first to soft peaks. Then add the sugar, gradually while beating, and beat until the whites are firm enough to hold detailed swirls. It's imperative that you beat the meringue until it's very firm.

and you end up with delicate, sugar-crusted bubbles.

The more sugar there is in a meringue, the more water can be drawn out and evaporated, and the drier and stiffer the meringue will be. In general, hard meringues require 4 tablespoons of sugar per large egg white. For soft meringues, the traditional formula is 2 tablespoons of sugar per egg white.

A meringue that's too soft or that can't hold its shape may simply not have enough sugar. For their cookbooks on healthful eating, Time Life chefs found that they needed at least 1½ tablespoons of sugar per egg white to get a stable meringue.

The solution to weeping and beading meringues

Two common problems that occur with meringues are weeping, which are "tears" of liquid that collect in a puddle under the meringue, and beading, brown droplets of syrup on the outer surface of the meringue.

Weeping is caused by undercooking. If the proteins don't get hot enough to cook (or firmly set) the foam, it collapses, and the liquid film on

the surface of the bubbles leaks out. If a soft meringue on a pie starts to weep after the meringue is baked, the meringue didn't get hot enough to cook all the way through. It helps to pile the meringue on a piping-hot pie filling rather than on a chilled one. Another trick, gleaned from Roland Mesnier, the White House pastry chef, is to sprinkle fine cake crumbs (nothing fancy—I've even used Twinkies) on the hot filling before mounding on the meringue. The combination of crumbs and hot filling can

give you an incredibly dry seal between the meringue and the filling.

Lowering the oven temperature and increasing the cooking time can help with weeping, too. Food reaches higher temperatures in the center when cooked at lower temperatures for a longer time. So to get my nine-egg-white-high meringue cooked through, I cook it at a fairly low temperature—300° to 325°F—for 30 to 45 minutes.

For soft meringues that aren't baked but are just heated by a boiling sugar

syrup (an Italian meringue), weeping could be a result of the sugar syrup's not being hot enough to fully "cook" the meringue.

Beading is caused by overcooking. The proteins tighten and squeeze out water droplets, which brown because of the sugar they contain. Try lowering the temperature or decreasing the baking time, or both together, to solve a beading problem.

You can actually undercook and overcook the meringue at the same time and have both weeping and beading occur. If you pile the meringue on a cool filling and cook at a high temperature (425° to 450°F) for just a few minutes, the surface will have beads from overcooking, and underneath will be puddles of liquid that drained from the undercooked bottom and center of the meringue.

Avoiding the dreaded shrinking meringue

When meringues are baked in the oven, the tightening of the egg-white proteins causes the meringue to shrink. It also makes the meringue difficult to cut smoothly. My solution to this problem is to add a little cornstarch paste to the meringue. Cornstarch prevents the egg-white bonds from tightening (in the same way that it prevents eggs from curdling in a pastry cream) so the meringue doesn't shrink. This tender meringue with starch cuts like a dream.

To add cornstarch to a meringue, you should first dissolve it in water (dry cornstarch can't access the water in the meringue—the sugar has it all) and heat it. Dissolve 1 tablespoon cornstarch in ½ cup water and heat it until a thick paste forms. After all the sugar is beaten in and the meringue is firm, keep the mixer running and add all the cornstarch paste, a teaspoon at a time.

Shirley O. Corriher, a food scientist from Atlanta, is the author of *Cook Wise: The Hows & Whys of Successful Cooking* (William Morrow), which won a James Beard award in 1998. She is a contributing editor to *Fine Cooking*. ♦



AT THE MARKET

For more on artisan baking, call the **Bread Bakers Guild of America** at 412/322-8275. To find out about studying artisan baking, call the **San Francisco Baking Institute** at 650/589-5724, or the **National Baking Center** in Minneapolis at 612/374-3303.

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You can buy pastry cloths and rolling pin covers from specialty baking stores and catalogs. Author Carole Walters prefers those made by Ateco brand, which are available from the company



(800/645-7170), from **Bridge Kitchenware** (in New York, 212/688-4220; outside of New York: 800/274-3435; www.bridgekitchenware.com), and from other outlets. At Bridge, the cloth and the cover together are \$5.60.

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A soft southern flour such as **White Lily** is best for the biscuits featured on p. 43. If you can't find the flour in your area, call 800/264-5459 or visit www.whitelily.com.



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Miele, 800/843-7231; www.miele.com

Thermador, 800/656-9226; www.thermador.com

Viking, 601/451-4133; www.viking-range.com

You can buy a countertop convection oven (with rotisserie) by Delonghi for \$399 from **Williams-Sonoma** (800/541-2233; www.williams-sonoma.com). Dvorsons Food Service Equipment in San Francisco (415/861-5840; www.wolfstoves.com) carries two large countertop convection ovens, the older model Farberware for \$469, and the Cadco for \$349. **Bowery Kitchen Supply** (212/376-4982; www.st4yahoo.com/bowery) also carries the Cadco, as well as two designed for caterers by Sodir for \$550 and \$725.

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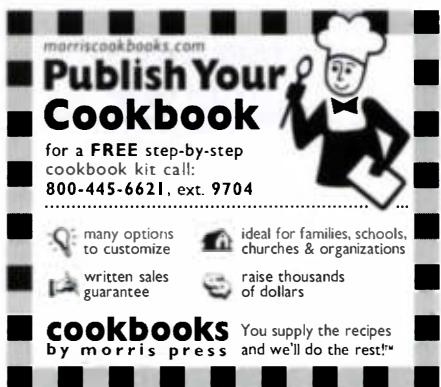
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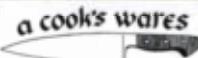
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NUTRITION INFORMATION

Recipe (analysis per serving)	Page	Calories		Protein (g)	Carb (g)	Fats (g)				Chol (mg)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Notes
		total	from fat			total	sat	mono	poly				
Crunchy Parmesan Chicken	38	610	330	56	10	37	15	13	6	235	820	0	
Honey-Balsamic Baked Chicken	39	640	330	56	23	37	10	18	7	210	1,010	4	
Baked Chicken with Herbs & Garlic	39	550	310	53	5	35	13	13	6	230	880	0	
Lemon Tarragon Chicken	40	540	310	53	2	35	14	13	6	230	950	0	
Slow-Baked "City" Ham	43	220	70	35	0	8	3	4	1	80	1,870	0	5 oz. portion lean ham
"Cat-Head" Biscuits	43	180	60	4	27	7	4	2	0	15	220	0	per biscuit
Vegetable Stock for Pea Recipes	46	10	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	680	0	per cup
Pasta with Peas & Basil	45	450	220	13	43	25	14	7	1	120	520	3	first-course portion
Pea & Spinach Soup with Coconut Milk	46	170	90	4	16	10	8	1	0	5	840	3	per serving
Pea & Parsley Risotto	47	550	170	14	74	19	11	6	1	60	1,340	4	first-course portion
Spoonbread	49	230	110	10	22	12	6	4	1	170	500	1	based on 6 servings
Lemon-Lime Meringue Pie	52	490	200	7	69	22	13	7	1	180	105	1	per slice (based on 12)
Rye Bread	59	80	5	3	16	0.5	0	0	0.5	0	170	1	per slice (based on 16)
Potato-Filled Pierogis	62	75	20	3	13	2	1	1	0	15	115	0	per pierogi
Meat-Filled Pierogis	63	80	20	5	10	2.5	1	1	0	25	140	0	per pierogi
Apricot-Filled Pierogis	63	100	30	3	16	3	1	1.5	0.5	20	50	1	per pierogi
Lemon Chiffon Cake	75	390	210	5	41	23	9	9	3	155	150	0	per slice (based on 14)
Almond & Chocolate Chiffon Cake	76	460	190	8	64	21	5	10	4	105	140	2	per slice (based on 14)
Cinnamon Chiffon Cake	77	260	90	5	38	10	1	6	3	105	130	1	per slice (based on 14)
Asparagus, Goat Cheese & Bacon Tart	90	580	380	20	32	42	17	19	4	90	630	3	

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at The Food Consulting Company of San Diego, California. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in

the calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used.



Frozen Puff Pastry Makes a Fast Foundation for a Savory Tart

Whether filled with something sweet for dessert or topped with savory ingredients to make a main course or appetizer, tarts rank among my favorite things to make and eat. But while I love making pastry, the mixing, chilling, and rolling required can stretch the time needed to make dinner well beyond my limits on a weeknight. That's when I turn to ready-made puff pastry.

Many bakeries sell excellent puff pastry, and high-quality versions can be found in the supermarket's freezer section. And frozen puff pas-

try takes less than an hour to defrost, so you can buy it and make it for dinner tonight.

Once the pastry is taken care of, take stock of the refrigerator and look through the pantry. You won't find much that couldn't go on top of a tart. But drain or dry very moist ingredients, such as tomatoes and mushrooms, or they'll make the puff pastry quite soggy.

This asparagus tart seems just right for spring, but the following are some of my other favorite combinations.

- ◆ Thin slices of boiled potatoes brushed lightly with olive

oil, sprinkled with finely chopped fresh rosemary and grated Gruyère.

- ◆ Steamed clams (out of their shells), sautéed pancetta, and chopped marinated artichokes. (Brush the pastry with olive oil before adding the toppings.)
- ◆ Cooked greens and bacon. (Spread a bit of mustard on the pastry before adding the toppings.)

- ◆ Grilled radicchio with anchovies and hot pepper flakes.
- ◆ Tomato paste thinned with a bit of olive oil and spread over the pastry. Top with cooked, well-drained Italian sausage.

Asparagus, Goat Cheese & Bacon Tart

Be sure to cook the pastry fully to get it light and crisp. *Serves four.*

5 slices bacon
1 shallot, finely chopped
1 bunch asparagus (about 1 lb.), tough ends trimmed, cut into 1-inch pieces
1/2 lb. puff pastry, defrosted if frozen
1/2 lb. soft goat cheese
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 large egg yolk mixed with 1/2 tsp. water

Heat the oven to 450°F.

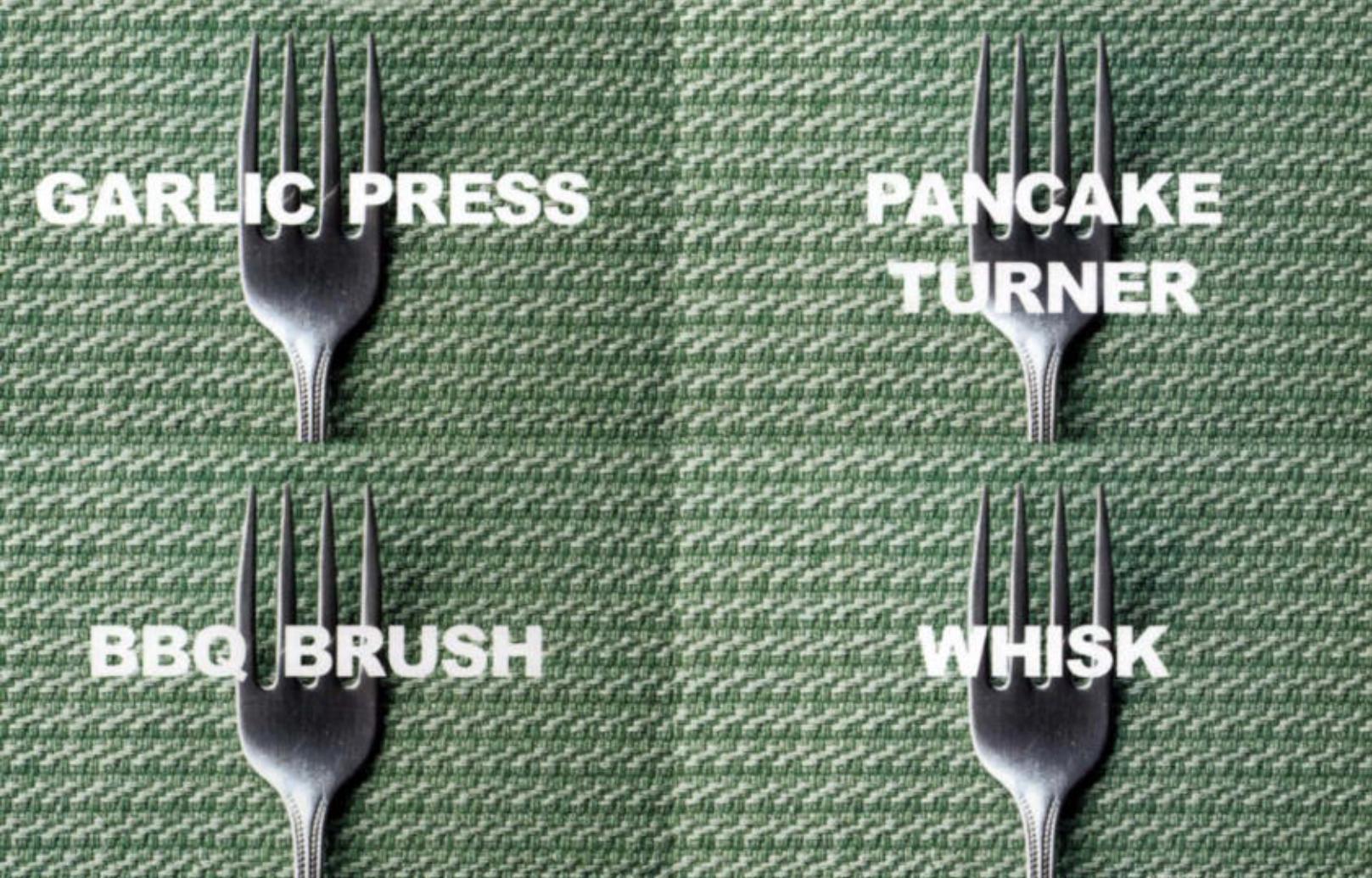
In a medium frying pan, cook the bacon over medium heat until crisp, about 8 min. Transfer to paper towels. Pour off all but 1 Tbs. of the bacon fat from the pan. Add the shallot to the pan and sauté for about 1 min. Add the asparagus and cook over medium-high heat until the asparagus is crisp-tender, about 5 min. Remove the pan from the heat. Crumble the bacon into tiny pieces and mix it with the asparagus and shallot.

On a lightly floured piece of kitchen parchment, roll out the pastry to a 10x16-inch rectangle. Transfer the pastry and the parchment to a baking sheet.

Using your fingers, pat the goat cheese onto the pastry, spreading it as evenly as you can and leaving a 1-inch border around the edge. Sprinkle the asparagus, bacon, and shallot mixture evenly over the goat cheese. Season with salt and pepper.

Brush the edge of the tart with the egg wash. Bake until the pastry is golden brown, 20 to 25 min. Let cool slightly and serve warm.

Jan Newberry is a writer living in Oakland, California. She is the former managing editor of Fine Cooking. ♦



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Italian-Style Cheese, Made in Sonoma

Cindy Callahan and her husband didn't exactly set out to become sheep farmers when they bought their weekend place in Sonoma years ago. "We just needed a few animals to graze the pasture," she explains, "but I found myself becoming very interested in raising them."

The Callahans had trouble finding anyone in the United States who could teach them

about sheep dairying, so off they went to Italy, "armed with an Italian-English dictionary, a camcorder, and a notepad." After years of research and trial and error, Cindy and her sons, Liam and Brett, craft handmade sheep's and cow's milk cheeses that have been compared to some of Italy's very best at their sheep dairy, Bellwether Farms.

The sheep's milk comes from Bellwether's flock of 300 East Frisian ewes, a northern European breed that produces two to three times more milk than domestic breeds.

Bellwether Farms' ricotta drains overnight in Italian basket molds; it takes on a basketweave imprint that's unique to the mold. Rich sheep's milk and proper drainage gives this ricotta a sweetness that mass-produced cheese just doesn't have.



1 Liam and Cindy feed lunch to "the girls," their flock of East Frisian ewes.

2 Ricotta is poured into basket molds.

3 Liam turns wheels of San Andreas.

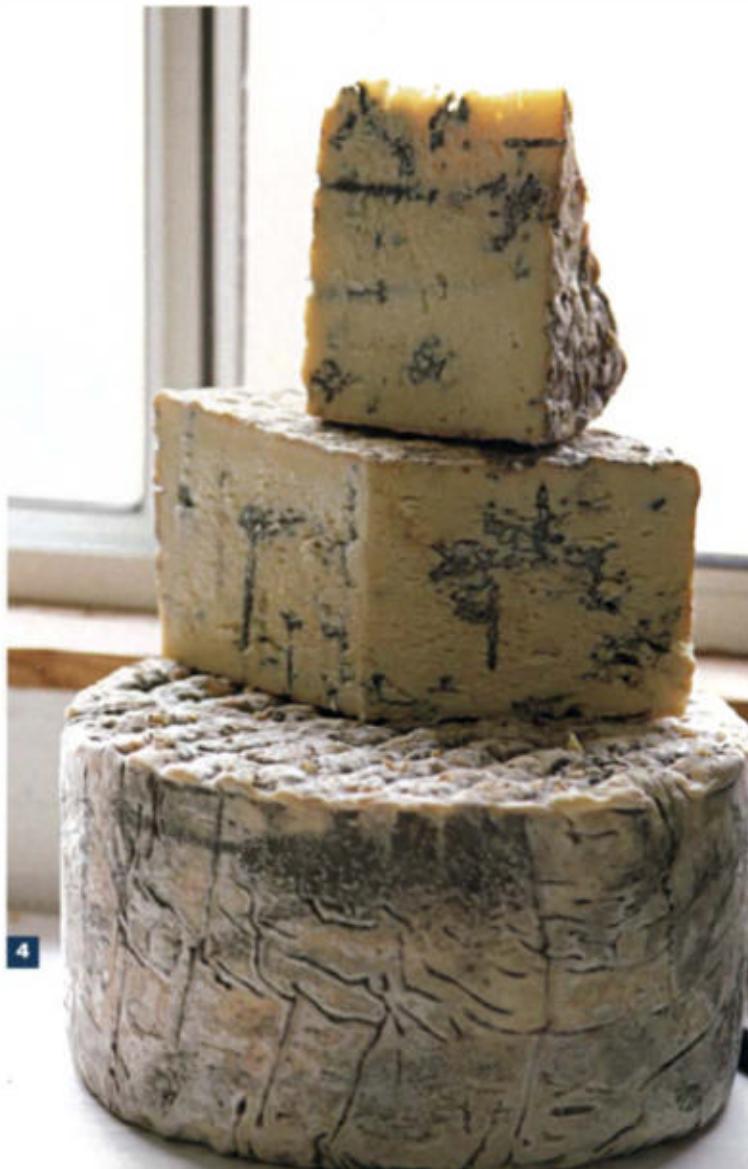
4 Bellwether Blue gets its golden color from the milk of Jersey cows.

Aged cheeses need turning to ensure that they develop an even rind and maintain a symmetrical shape as they lose moisture and ripen. In the ripening room (below left), Liam tends to wheels of San

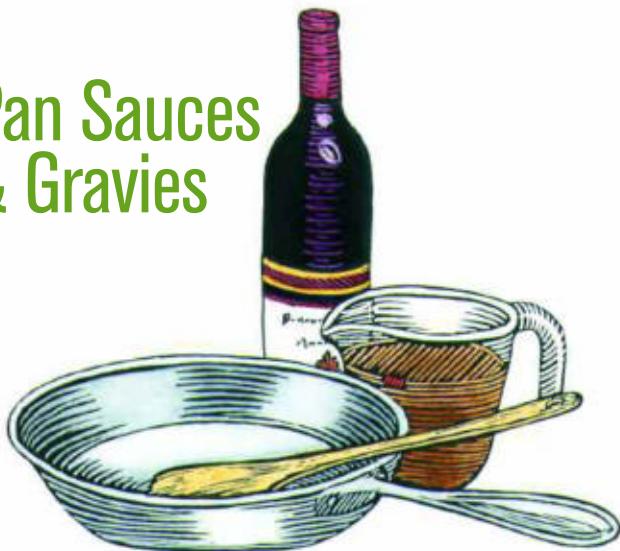


Andreas, a sheep's milk cheese aptly named for where the farm is located—right along the San Andreas Fault.

Bellwether Farms' newest cheese is Bellwether Blue, a cow's milk blue with the deep flavor of Stilton and the creaminess of Gorgonzola. The cheese is exceptional not just for its full flavor but also because it's much less salty than most blues. The cheese gets its golden hue from the milk of Jersey cows (Holstein milk is whiter), which are bred with this in mind.



Pan Sauces & Gravies



One of the simplest sauces for sautéed and roasted meat, poultry, or fish is a quick sauce made by deglazing the sauté pan or roasting pan. Deglazing is the technique of adding a bit of liquid to the hot pan after the food has been cooked to dissolve the caramelized juices stuck to the bottom of the pan. Follow these guidelines for quick sauces that require few ingredients and provide a wonderful depth of flavor:

◆ Choose a pan that's neither too large nor too cramped for whatever you're cooking. (Too much surface area will result in burned juices and a bitter flavor, and too little will prevent the juices from caramelizing.) Nonstick pans are a poor choice since juices won't stick to the surface. Sauté or roast your ingredients according to your recipe. Transfer the food to a warm place while making the sauce.

◆ Before deglazing, remove any excess fat from the pan to avoid a greasy tasting sauce.

◆ If you like, add a chopped shallot to the still-hot pan before deglazing for a bit more flavor. Cook over medium heat until the shallot begins to soften.

◆ Deglaze by adding wine (red, white, or fortified), good stock, vinegar, cider, beer, brandy, or water to the hot pan. Use enough liquid to cover the bottom of the pan— $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup for a medium sauté pan, more for a roasting pan.

◆ As the liquid simmers, scrape the bottom of the pan with a wooden spoon and stir to dissolve the caramelized juices. Simmer until the liquid is reduced by about half. Serve the sauce at this stage (as a *jas*, or unthickened sauce) or embellish it further.

◆ For more sauce, add some good-tasting stock. Simmer to reduce, and then enrich the sauce with a few tablespoons of cream or *crème fraîche* and reduce again, or whisk in a few tablespoons of butter (see Finishing Sauces with Butter, at right). If you like, season with chopped herbs or a splash of vinegar or spirits, such as Cognac.

◆ Add a vegetable purée to a pan sauce to thicken and add flavor.

◆ For roasting-pan gravies, it's easiest to transfer the deglazing liquid to a smaller saucepan once the caramelized juices have been dissolved.

fine COOKING Sauce Guide

BY MOLLY STEVENS

OVER the past six years in the *Fine Cooking* test kitchens, we've been introduced to a whole repertoire of modern sauce recipes. From chunky, vibrant salsa to smooth, rich *beurre blanc*, most can be made in short order, few require any fancy ingredients, and each one can easily be adapted to complement a particular meal or appetite. What follows are our twelve favorite and most frequently used sauces—the ones that we make at home regularly and serve with all sorts of foods.

REDUCTIONS

Many classic sauces, like veal *demi-glace*, rely on long, slow simmering to develop their intense flavors and lip-smacking viscosity.

These complicated sauces may have fallen out of fashion, but the technique—reduction—is useful in modern saucemaking. As a sauce simmers, the water evaporates, creating a more concentrated, somewhat thicker sauce. Here are some tips for better reductions.

◆ Flavors become more intense when reduced so it's vital to begin with good-tasting ingredients. For example, an unpleasant wine will taste even worse when reduced.

◆ Heavy cream can be reduced by about half its volume, creating an incredibly unctuous, rich sauce base (reducing by more than half can make the cream

separate). Add cream to a deglazing liquid in a sauce and then reduce, or reduce it on its own and then add it to a sauce.

◆ Salt gets more concentrated when water evaporates, so avoid using canned stocks, which are often very salty.

◆ Multiple reductions create layers of flavors. For example, a deeply flavored sauce may be made by first reducing the wine used to deglaze a pan, adding some stock and reducing it, and finally adding cream and reducing once more.

◆ For the best flavor, reduce liquids at a steady simmer or a gentle boil so that some of the sauce splatters onto the sides of the pan, where it can caramelize. Stir the sauce occasionally to dissolve these caramelized bits back into the sauce.

Storage

Many sauces can be made ahead and refrigerated or frozen, which make them ideal as last-minute additions. Store in a small jar or bowl covered with plastic in the refrigerator or even in a heavy-gauge zip-top bag. A smaller container means less exposure to air and less spoilage. Gently reheat sauces to be served warm over low heat. Caramel and chocolate sauce are best heated in a double boiler over simmering water.

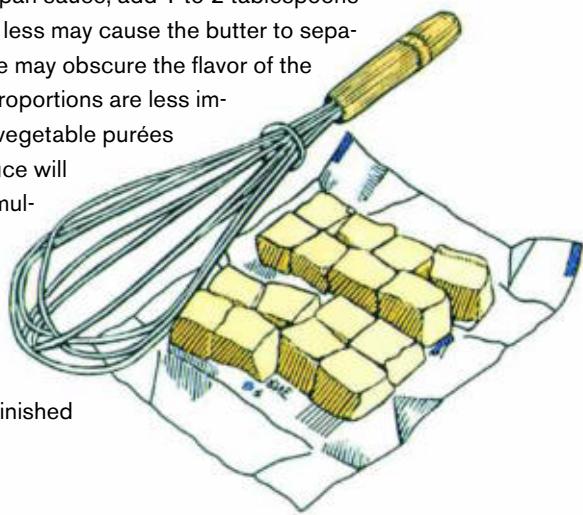
Approximate storage times

Serve immediately	<i>beurre blanc</i> pan sauce
24 hours	salsa
1 or 2 days	marinara mayonnaise vegetable purée vinaigrette made with fresh ingredients (like herbs) <i>crème anglaise</i> fruit coulis
1 week	basic vinaigrette (without fresh ingredients such as herbs or shallots)
2 weeks	ginger-soy dipping sauce pesto and tapenade caramel sauce chocolate sauce
freeze up to 2 months	marinara pesto vegetable purée caramel sauce chocolate sauce fruit coulis

Finishing sauces with butter

Whisking a knob or two of cold unsalted butter into a warm pan sauce or vegetable purée has long been a secret of many restaurant chefs as a quick way to create satiny-smooth sauces with an incomparable sheen and velvety texture. The technique, known as *monter au beurre*, is based on the same principle as making a *beurre blanc*—the butter must not melt so much that the butterfat separates, but rather it must soften to emulsify and thicken the sauce slightly.

- ◆ Whisk the cold butter, a little at a time, into a warm sauce over low heat. The butter should incorporate into the sauce without melting into oily puddles.
- ◆ For $\frac{1}{2}$ cup pan sauce, add 1 to 2 tablespoons butter. Using less may cause the butter to separate out, more may obscure the flavor of the sauce. The proportions are less important with vegetable purées since the sauce will already be emulsified by the vegetable solids.
- ◆ Don't let a sauce boil once you've finished it with butter.



The texture and consistency of several classic sauces, including mayonnaise, vinaigrette, and *beurre blanc*, depend on a technique known as emulsification. This important bit of kitchen alchemy lets you combine two ingredients, typically oil and water (or other thin liquid), that wouldn't ordinarily combine. When successfully formed, an emulsified sauce will be thick enough to coat foods and stable enough to last for anywhere from an hour to a week without separating. A poorly formed emulsion won't thicken and will appear broken or separated, with the oil or melted butter pooling on the top. Here are a few useful tricks and principles:

- ◆ An emulsion needs vigorous whisking or beating to form. Use a whisk, a blender, a food processor, or in some

cases a mortar and pestle.

- ◆ Start with the water or liquid part of the emulsion and add the oil or other fat to that. For example, when making a vinaigrette, begin with the vinegar. For a mayonnaise, it's the lemon juice that acts as the liquid, and in *beurre blanc*, it's the wine and vinegar reduction.
- ◆ Whisk in the oil (or butter) very slowly—drop by drop—to start. Once the sauce begins to thicken and you can see that the emulsion is taking hold, you can add the oil in a steady stream. Never dump in all the oil at once.
- ◆ Set the bowl on a potholder or folded dishtowel to keep it from spinning while you whisk.
- ◆ If a sauce seems to be getting too thick (small droplets of oil may begin to appear on the surface), it may be about

to break, or separate. Immediately stop adding the oil and whisk in a few drops of water, vinegar, or lemon juice to thin the sauce somewhat before continuing.

- ◆ If a sauce does break, salvage it by beginning another batch in a clean bowl, but instead of adding the oil or butter, whisk in the broken sauce. Unfortunately, due to the delicate nature of a *beurre blanc* emulsion, it doesn't respond to this trick.
- ◆ Many emulsified sauces contain some type of emulsifying agent or emulsifier—an ingredient that stabilizes the emulsification. The most effective is an egg yolk, which is why egg-based mayonnaise is so stable. Mustard acts as the emulsifier for vinaigrettes, and vegetable purées work to thicken pesto and other vegetable-based sauces.

Savory Sauces

Vinaigrette

Infinitely adaptable, versatile, quick to make with pantry ingredients. The only trick is the emulsification.

Use on green salads of course, but also on cool or room temperature potatoes, rice, grains, pasta, beans, and lentils; drizzle on warm grilled or roasted vegetables; nap over grilled, broiled, or steamed fish or chicken.



Basic Recipe & Variations

Classic Vinaigrette

Yields about 1 cup.

- 1/4 cup red- or white-wine vinegar
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 1/4 tsp. salt, or to taste
- 1/8 tsp. freshly ground black pepper, or to taste
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

In a small bowl, whisk together the vinegar, mustard, salt and pepper. Whisking constantly, add the oil in a slow, steady stream until completely incorporated and the sauce is slightly thickened and emulsified.

Other vinegars and oils

Use another vinegar (sherry, balsamic, Champagne, tarragon, fruit, cider) or substitute 1/3 cup fresh lemon juice for the wine vinegar. Try another oil (walnut, hazelnut, or other nut, or a citrus-infused oil) alone or in combination with olive or a neutral-tasting vegetable oil.

Herb: Make the basic recipe using any combination of vinegar and oil and add 3 Tbs. fresh herbs, single or a mix. Especially good are parsley, basil, dill, tarragon, chervil, and cilantro.

Roasted garlic: Toss 10 unpeeled cloves of garlic in olive oil, wrap tightly in aluminum foil, roast at 400°F for

30 min. until very soft, squeeze the pulp from the skins, combine with 1/4 cup white-wine vinegar, 1/2 tsp. grated lemon zest, 1/4 tsp. fresh thyme, and purée in the food processor. Add olive oil according to the basic recipe and omit the mustard.

Black olive: Make the basic recipe using red-wine vinegar and olive oil. Whisk in 1 minced clove garlic, 2 tsp. chopped capers, 1/3 cup finely chopped kalamata or other good black olives, 2 finely minced anchovy fillets, and 1 Tbs. chopped fresh mint.

Sun-dried tomato

basil: Make the basic recipe with either vinegar and whisk in

3 Tbs. chopped sun-dried tomatoes in oil, 1/2 cup finely diced fresh tomato, 2 Tbs. chopped fresh basil, and 1/2 tsp. grated orange zest.

Caesar-style: Purée together 2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice, 3 chopped anchovy fillets, 2 cloves garlic, 3 Tbs. grated Parmesan, and a dash of hot sauce. Whisk this purée into the basic recipe made with white-wine vinegar.

Honey mustard: Add 1 Tbs. whole-grain mustard and 2 Tbs. honey to the basic recipe and proceed, using white-wine vinegar and vegetable oil.

Salsa

Zingy, refreshing salsas are easy to improvise—simply balance the proportions of ingredients according to taste.

Top burritos, tacos, enchiladas, nachos, chili, or bean soups; add to omelets and scrambled eggs; use in place of ketchup on hamburgers and sandwiches; spoon onto grilled pork, beef, poultry, and fish; dip chips; dollop onto fritters and savory pancakes.

Tomato Salsa

Yields 2 cups.

- 4 medium ripe tomatoes (about 1 pound), cored, seeded, and finely diced
- 1/4 red onion, finely chopped
- 2 jalapeño or serrano chiles, cored, seeded, and finely chopped
- 1 bunch fresh cilantro, chopped
- 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 Tbs. fresh lime juice
- 1 clove garlic, smashed and minced
- 1/4 tsp. salt, or to taste
- Pinch freshly ground pepper

Combine all the ingredients in a medium bowl. Toss well and serve.

Roasted tomatillo and green chile

Arrange 1 lb. tomatillos (husks removed), 1 fresh poblano, 2 jalapeños, and 4 scallions on a foil-lined baking sheet. Drizzle with olive oil and toss to coat. Broil until softened and dark in spots, about 12 min., turning once during cooking. When cool, remove the skin, stems, and seeds from the chiles. Dice all the vegetables and combine with 1/2 minced small onion, 1 minced clove garlic, 1/4 cup chopped cilantro, and salt and pepper to taste.

Tropical fruit: Dice and combine 1 large mango, 1 large

papaya, and 2 small kiwis. Add 1 cup diced pineapple, 1/3 cup diced red bell pepper, 1/4 cup diced red onion, 1/4 cup chopped cilantro leaves, 1 to 2 cored, seeded, and minced jalapeños, 1 Tbs. lime juice, and a pinch each of salt and cayenne.

Grilled corn, tomato, and chipotle: Rub 2 ears of husked corn with olive oil and grill over medium-hot coals until slightly blackened, about 10 min. Grill 5 plum tomatoes until the skins are blistered and charred, about 8 min. Scrape the kernels from the cobs and dice the toma-

toes. Combine the corn and tomatoes with 1/4 cup very finely diced red onion, 1 finely chopped canned chipotle chile, 2 Tbs. lime juice, 1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil, 1 Tbs. finely chopped fresh oregano (or 2 tsp. dried), and salt to taste.

Mayonnaise

Distinct from and immeasurably superior to bottled mayonnaise. The creamy, rich character comes from an emulsion of oil, egg, and lemon juice.

Dollop onto grilled seafood or chicken; nap over room temperature boiled shrimp or lobster; dress composed salads of tuna, chicken, egg, ham, or potato; use as a dipping sauce for fried seafood or crudites; stir into warm brothy soups, especially fish-based; spread onto croutons and sandwiches.

Creamy Mayonnaise

Yields about 1 1/4 cups.

- 2 large egg yolks
- 1 tsp. fresh lemon juice or white-wine vinegar
- 1/2 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 cup vegetable or olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground white pepper

Whisk the yolks, lemon juice, and mustard together until frothy. Slowly whisk in the oil, a drop at a time, until the sauce begins to emulsify. Add the remaining oil in a slow, steady stream, whisking constantly. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Aioli

Smash and mince 3 to 4 cloves garlic. Make the basic mayonnaise, adding the garlic to the yolks and lemon juice, omitting the mustard, and using olive oil.

Lemon-herb: Add 1 tsp. grated lemon zest and 1/4 cup chopped fresh herbs (such as dill, parsley, tarragon, chervil, or basil) to the basic recipe.

Rouille: Roast, peel, seed, and purée 1 medium red bell pepper. Whisk together with 1/2 tsp. tomato paste and 1 large clove garlic, smashed and minced. Make the basic mayonnaise using olive oil and omitting the mustard. Whisk in the bell pepper and tomato mixture and

season with 1/4 tsp. hot sauce, or more to taste.

Rémoulade-style

Make the basic recipe, increasing the mustard to 2 Tbs. and adding 2 Tbs. white-wine vinegar, 2 Tbs. tomato paste, 2 minced cloves garlic, 2 tsp. sweet paprika, and a dash hot sauce to the egg yolk and lemon juice base. Use all vegetable oil and finish by stirring in 1/4 cup each of finely chopped scallions, capers, and parsley.

Curry: Heat 1 Tbs. curry powder in 1 Tbs. vegetable oil for 1 min. and add to the basic recipe. Other spice blends, such as chili powder or *garam masala*, also work well.

Chipotle chile

Stir 1 Tbs. minced canned chipotle chile and 1 minced small clove garlic into the basic recipe. Season with black pepper in place of white. If desired, stir in 3 Tbs. chopped scallions or cilantro.

Ginger-lime-cilantro

Make the basic recipe, substituting 1 Tbs. lime juice for the 1 tsp. lemon juice, omitting the mustard, and using 1 1/4 cups peanut oil with 1/2 tsp. toasted sesame oil. Grate a 3- to 4-inch piece of peeled ginger and squeeze out about 2 Tbs. ginger juice (or use bottled). Whisk in the juice and 3 Tbs. chopped fresh cilantro.

Pesto & Tapenade

Traditionally pounded in a mortar and pestle, these intense sauces are quick work in a food processor. A little bit goes a long way and they keep well.

Thin with a bit of pasta cooking water and toss with pasta; spread onto pizza dough, bruschetta, or sandwiches; spoon onto grilled and broiled seafood, meats, chicken, and vegetables; stir into fresh cheeses for spreads; use as a dressing for white bean salad or lightly steamed vegetables; add to vinaigrettes; stir into pan sauces.

Basil Pesto

Yields about 1 cup.

- 1/4 cup pine nuts
- 2 cloves garlic, smashed
- Pinch salt
- 3 cups loosely packed basil leaves, stems removed
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Chop the nuts, garlic, and salt in a food processor until fine. Add the basil and oil and process until smooth. Add the cheese and process to incorporate. Taste for salt.

Parsley and walnut pesto

Make the basic recipe, substituting fresh parsley for the basil and walnuts for the pine nuts. For bigger flavor, lightly toast the walnuts first and add a bit of grated lemon zest to the sauce.

Cilantro and pumpkin seed pesto: Make the basic recipe, substituting cilantro for the basil, toasted pumpkin seeds for the pine nuts, and a neutral-tasting oil (grapeseed or vegetable) for the olive oil. Omit the cheese; add a bit more salt.

Tapenade: Combine the fol-

lowing ingredients in a food processor: 1 cup pitted kalamata or other good-quality black olives, 2 to 3 anchovy fillets, 2 minced small cloves garlic, 2 Tbs. capers, and 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil. Pulse until the mixture becomes a rough purée. Season to taste with a squeeze of lemon juice and freshly ground black pepper.

Sun-dried tomato

tapenade: Combine the following ingredients in a food processor: 1/3 cup chopped rehydrated or oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes (drained), 1 to 2 minced cloves garlic, 1/3 cup each packed basil and parsley

leaves, 2 Tbs. grated Parmesan, 3 Tbs. pine nuts (lightly toasted, if you like), 1/4 cup olive oil, and 1/2 tsp. freshly ground pepper. Process until the mixture becomes a rough purée.

Anchoiade: Combine the following ingredients in a food processor: 4 ounces anchovy fillets (drained if canned; soaked and patted dry if salt-packed), 2 minced small cloves garlic, and 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley. Pulse until the mixture becomes a rough purée. Transfer to a bowl and stir in 1 Tbs. balsamic vinegar and freshly ground black pepper to taste.

Marinara

A stash of marinara in the freezer means you can produce a range of sauces and soups in minutes.

Use on pasta, polenta, and pizza; season and bind casseroles and baked pasta dishes; pour over baked chicken or fish; thin with stock and use as a braising liquid for meatballs, stews, and pot roasts; use as a soup base for vegetable and meat soups.

Classic Marinara

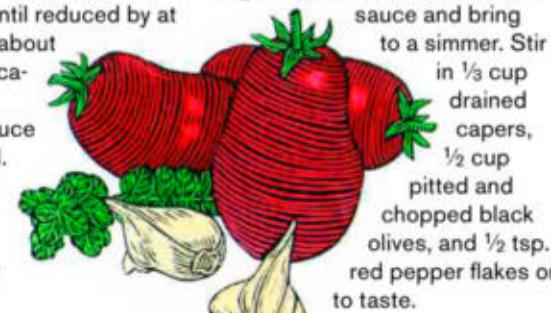
Yields 1 quart.

- 3 Tbs. olive oil
- 1 small onion, thinly sliced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup dry red wine
- 3 lb. fresh plum tomatoes, peeled and puréed (about 6 cups purée) or two 28-oz. cans crushed tomatoes
- 2 tsp. dried oregano
- Salt
- 3 Tbs. minced fresh basil
- 1/4 cup minced fresh parsley
- Freshly ground black pepper

In a large saucepan, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Sauté

the onion until it begins to wilt, about 5 min. Add the garlic and sauté just until fragrant. Stir in the wine. Add the tomatoes, oregano, and 1/4 tsp. salt. Bring to a simmer, reduce the heat to low, and cook until reduced by at least one-third, about 2 hours. Stir occasionally, taking care that the sauce never boils hard.

Stir in the basil and parsley. Taste and add salt and pepper as needed.



Puttanesca: Make the basic recipe. Heat 3 Tbs. olive oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add 5 chopped anchovy fillets and cook, stirring, until they begin to dissolve. Add the basic

sauce and bring to a simmer. Stir in 1/3 cup drained capers, 1/2 cup pitted and chopped black olives, and 1/2 tsp. red pepper flakes or to taste.

Porcini: Make the basic recipe. Soak 2 oz. dried porcini mushrooms in hot water to cover until soft, about 25 min. Drain and reserve 1/3 cup of the soaking liquid. Squeeze the mushrooms dry, chop them, and add them to the basic sauce. Strain the reserved porcini soaking liquid through a coffee filter and add it to the sauce. Simmer until thick and not at all watery, 15 to 25 min.

Beurre Blanc

Quick to make, a perfect last-minute trick to dress up the simplest foods.

Spoon over poached fish, scallops, shrimp, and chicken breasts; drizzle over steamed or grilled vegetables, especially asparagus.



Classic Beurre Blanc

Yields about 1/2 cup.

1/4 cup dry white wine
3 Tbs. white-wine vinegar
1 medium shallot, minced
1/2 cup unsalted butter, very cold and cut into 1/2-inch pieces
Salt and freshly ground white pepper

In a small saucepan, combine the wine, vinegar, and shallot. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat and cook until the liquid has

reduced to 1 to 2 Tbs. Turn the heat to low and gradually whisk in the butter, piece by piece. The butter must not melt too fast but should soften gradually to form a creamy sauce. Occasionally move the pan off the heat to keep it from getting too hot and continue whisking in the butter. Season with salt and pepper to taste. For a perfectly smooth sauce, strain through a fine sieve. Serve as soon as possible, or keep warm for a short time over warm (not boiling) water.

Beurre rouge: Make the basic recipe, replacing the white wine and white-wine vinegar with dry red wine and red-wine vinegar.

Lemon: Make the basic recipe, using all lemon juice in place of the vinegar and the wine. Add 1 tsp. grated lemon zest along with the shallot.

Mustard: Make the basic recipe and whisk in 1 1/2 tsp. Dijon mustard just before serving.

Horseradish: Make the basic recipe and whisk in 1 Tbs. drained prepared horseradish just before serving.

Herb: Make the basic recipe and whisk in 1 Tbs. chopped fresh herbs, alone or in combination. Good choices are dill, tarragon, chervil, chives, mint, or basil.

Vegetable Coulis

A deeply flavored, low-fat alternative to butter- or cream-based sauces. Easy to improvise with any sautéed, steamed, or roasted vegetable.

Spoon over grilled or roasted chicken, beef, and pork; nap onto sautéed fish, pork, chicken, or veal; a great way to add color to a plate; use to thicken pan sauces; add to vinaigrettes to boost their flavor.

Onion Coulis

Yields about 1 1/2 cups.

1 Tbs. unsalted butter
1 Tbs. olive oil
3 medium onions, thinly sliced
3 shallots, thinly sliced
1 small leek (white and pale green only), thinly sliced
1 1/2 cups chicken stock; more as needed
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

In a medium frying pan over low heat, heat the butter and oil. Add the onions, shallots, and leek; cook, covered, for 20 min.;

uncover and cook, stirring often, until very soft and a deep golden brown, another 40 min. Add the stock and boil for 6 to 8 min. to reduce slightly. Purée in a food processor and strain through a sieve or pass the mixture through a food mill. Season with salt and pepper to taste and add more stock if the sauce is too thick.

Other aromatic vegetables: Omit the onions and add 1 lb. of another aromatic vegetable, such as carrots, fennel, or tomatillos, to the shallots and leek. Cook until very

tender but not brown. For a richer sauce, use half cream and half stock.

Bell pepper: Roast or grill 3 to 4 red bell peppers until charred. Remove stems, seeds, ribs, and charred skins. Purée in a food processor and strain through a sieve or pass the mixture through a food mill. Season with a bit of balsamic vinegar, deglazed pan drippings, or a bit of puréed canned chipotle chile. Also good with poblano or Anaheim chiles in place of, or in addition to, the bell peppers.

Roasted garlic: Cut off the top third of 3 heads of garlic, wrap loosely in foil, and roast at 400°F until soft, about 1 hour. Squeeze the garlic pulp from the skins and work it through a food mill or a strainer. Season with salt and pepper. Put the purée in a small saucepan. Add 1 1/2 cups of stock or cream (or a combination of the two) and simmer until reduced to the desired consistency. Add a bit of extra-virgin olive oil for a smoother, creamier consistency.

Asian Dipping Sauce

Quickly whisked together, these sauces add vibrancy to many ordinary dishes.

Use as a sauce for wontons, dumplings, fritters, spring rolls, or grilled seafood, poultry, meat, or vegetables; dress fresh greens and vegetables, especially salads made with Asian noodles; use the Ginger-Soy and Southeast Asian as a marinade for meat, poultry, seafood, or tofu.

Ginger-Soy Dipping Sauce

Yields about 1 cup.

6 Tbs. soy sauce
1/4 cup toasted sesame oil
2 Tbs. dark or light rice vinegar or cider vinegar
2 Tbs. warm water, orange juice, or chicken stock
1 Tbs. minced fresh garlic
1 Tbs. minced fresh ginger
1 Tbs. sugar
1/4 cup minced scallion

In a small bowl, whisk together

all the ingredients, adding the scallions last when everything is well combined.

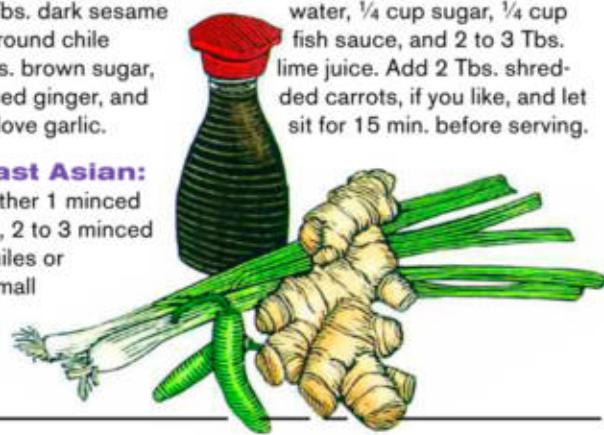
Spicy peanut: Follow the basic recipe, using a blender to combine the ingredients, and using only 2 Tbs. soy sauce, peanut or vegetable oil in place of the sesame oil, and light rice vinegar. Add 3 Tbs. smooth peanut butter and 2 tsp. finely minced serrano or jalapeño, or to taste.

Hoisin-chile: Whisk together 1/4 cup hoisin sauce,

2 Tbs. each soy sauce and rice vinegar, 1 Tbs. dark sesame oil, 2 tsp. ground chile paste, 2 Tbs. brown sugar, 1 Tbs. minced ginger, and 1 minced clove garlic.

Southeast Asian: Whisk together 1 minced clove garlic, 2 to 3 minced Thai bird chiles or 1 minced small serrano, 1 tsp. ground

chile paste (optional), 2/3 cup hot water, 1/4 cup sugar, 1/4 cup fish sauce, and 2 to 3 Tbs. lime juice. Add 2 Tbs. shredded carrots, if you like, and let sit for 15 min. before serving.



Dessert Sauces

Custard Sauce

The classic dessert sauce. Adapts well to a variety of flavorings. The only trick is not to curdle the eggs.

Pour a shallow pool under a slice of fruit tart or cake; drizzle across pound cakes and not-too-sweet pastries; spoon over fresh fruit.

Basic Recipe & Variations

Crème Anglaise

Yields about 2 cups.

2 cups milk
1/2 vanilla bean, split
6 large egg yolks
6 Tbs. sugar

In a medium, heavy-based saucepan, combine the milk and vanilla bean. Bring to just below a simmer and turn off the heat. Let sit to infuse for about 20 min. Put

the egg yolks and sugar in a medium bowl and whisk until pale and thick. Reheat the milk gently until it begins to steam. Slowly pour about half the milk onto the yolks, whisking continually. Pour the yolk-milk mixture back into the remaining milk, and cook over low heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until the custard begins to thicken slightly and you can draw a line

across the back of the spoon. The sauce should reach 175° to 180°F. Immediately strain into a clean bowl. Chill and serve cold.

Coffee: Make the basic recipe, adding 2 tsp. instant coffee to the milk and vanilla infusion.

Mint: Add a small bunch of mint to the milk with the vanilla bean and leave to infuse for

20 min. as directed. Proceed with the basic recipe. Also good with lavender, verbena, or lemon thyme.

Liqueur flavored: Add 1 to 2 Tbs. of spirits such as Grand Marnier, Amaretto, Cointreau, Armagnac, a favorite brandy, dark rum, or bourbon to the basic recipe after it has chilled.

Caramel Sauce

Keeps well, making it a great last-minute way to dress up dessert.

Drizzle over ice cream or plain cakes; mix with nuts and spread between cake layers; pour on apple-filled crêpes or grilled pineapple.

Classic Caramel Sauce

Yields about 3 cups.

2 cups sugar
1/2 cup water
2 Tbs. light corn syrup
8 Tbs. unsalted butter, cut into pieces, at room temperature
1 cup heavy cream

In a medium, heavy-based saucepan, combine the sugar, water, and corn syrup. Dissolve the sugar over medium heat, stirring until the mixture is clear. Increase the heat to high and cook, swirling the pan to cook evenly but no longer stirring, until caramelized. Take the pan off the heat

when the sugar is a very deep amber. Carefully add the butter and cream. Return the sauce to the heat and bring to a boil, whisking frequently until smooth, about 3 min. Let cool slightly.

Orange: Make the basic recipe, adding orange juice in place of the cream.

Butterscotch: Combine 2 cups light brown sugar, 12 Tbs. butter, and 4 Tbs. light corn syrup. Cook, stirring, over medium heat until the sugar dissolves and the sauce boils and becomes smooth. Finish as for basic recipe with 3/4 cup heavy cream and 1/2 tsp. salt.

Chocolate Sauce

Everybody's favorite. Use top-quality chocolate for the best tasting sauce.

Pour over ice cream; drizzle on plain cakes and pastries; pipe onto a shallow pool of crème anglaise for a black-and-white presentation.

Bittersweet Chocolate Sauce

Yields about 2 cups.

1 cup heavy cream
1 Tbs. light corn syrup
1/2 lb. bittersweet chocolate, chopped into small pieces
4 Tbs. unsalted butter, cut into pieces, at room temperature
Pinch salt

In a heavy-based saucepan, combine the heavy cream and corn syrup over medium heat until hot, but not boiling. Reduce the heat to medium-low and add the chocolate pieces, whisking until they melt and the sauce is smooth, about 5 min. Take the pan off the heat and whisk in the butter and the salt. Stir

until the sauce is smooth and glossy.

Mocha: Make the basic recipe, substituting 1/2 cup very strong coffee for half of the cream.

Mint: Make the basic recipe adding 1/2 tsp. mint extract to finish.

Milk chocolate: Make the basic recipe, substituting milk chocolate for the bittersweet.

Orange: Make the basic recipe, substituting 1/2 cup orange juice for half of the cream and adding 2 Tbs. Grand Marnier or Cointreau to finish.

Fruit Coulis

The simplest and most adaptable of dessert sauces.

Spoon onto ice cream; drizzle across plain cakes and pastries; pair with fruit tarts and chocolate desserts.

Raspberry Coulis

Yields about 2/3 cup.

6 oz. (1 1/2 cups) very ripe fresh raspberries (or frozen, thawed)
Juice from 1/2 lemon
Sugar to taste

In a blender, purée the rasp-

berries with the lemon juice. Add sugar to taste. Strain through a fine sieve. Cover and chill. Serve cold.

Other fruits: Use other ripe berries (such as strawberries or blackberries) or any other soft, ripe fruit (such as

peeled and pitted peaches or mangos or peeled kiwis) in place of the berries.

Add brandy: Add a splash of a complementary fruit brandy, such as Kirsch or Poire William, to the finished sauce.

To make a fruit fool:

This is more a mousse than a sauce, but it can be used to top cakes, shortcakes, and fresh fruit. Whip 1/2 cup chilled cream until it forms soft peaks. Fold in the fruit coulis. Serve loose as a sauce or chill to firm slightly.